

Understanding Settlements in Byzantine Greece

New Data and Approaches for Boeotia, Sixth to Thirteenth Century

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From the sixth to the thirteenth century, the cities of provincial Greece underwent profound transformation. They developed into early medieval “microtowns” and then into high medieval “megavillages.” How did these changes occur and what was the role of the rural environment in shaping them? The current study employs insights and methods from the field of landscape archaeology, which is relatively underutilized in Byzantine studies, to illuminate the changes. Through the study of surface ceramics and surviving architecture in the surroundings of ancient Tanagra in the modern prefecture of Boeotia (νομός Βοιωτίας) in central Greece (fig. 1), an attempt is made to appreciate settled space and trace the evolution of Byzantine settlement systems, beginning with the late antique town of Tanagra itself, and spreading out into its rural hinterland. This paper provides a model of investigation and historical change that can be applied more broadly in other Greek contexts.

This paper begins with an introduction to the field of landscape archaeology and its employment in Byzantine studies, followed by an account of the physical landscapes of Boeotia and of the microregion in question. Taking into account past and current use of the terms “town” and “rural periphery,” now popular in medieval Western¹ and

Byzantine studies,² the remainder of this study shows how this transformation of settled space was shaped from late antiquity to the thirteenth century.

Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (Aldershot, 1996); W. Pohl, I. Wood, and H. Reimitz, eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden, 2001); T. Williamson, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes: Settlement, Society, Environment* (Bollington, 2003); J. Henning, ed., *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. 1, *The Heirs of the Roman West* (Berlin, 2007); C. Goodson, A. E. Lester, and C. Symes, eds., *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400–1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space* (Farnham, 2010); J. Klápště, *The Czech Lands in Medieval Transformation*, trans. S. M. Miller and K. Millerová (Leiden, 2012); J. Baker, S. Brookes, and A. Reynolds, eds., *Landscapes of Defence in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013).

2 For specific case studies that deal with aspects of the city and its rural hinterland in the Byzantine provinces, see J. M. Wagstaff, *The Development of Rural Settlements: A Study of the Helos Plain in Southern Greece* (Amersham, 1982); A. W. Dunn, “The Transition from *Polis* to *Kastron* in the Balkans (III–VII cc.): General and Regional Perspectives,” *BMGS* 18 (1994): 60–80; J. F. Haldon, “The Idea of the Town in the Byzantine Empire,” in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G. P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (Leiden, 1999), 1–24; G. D. R. Sanders, “Problems in Interpreting Rural and Urban Settlement in Southern Greece, AD 365–700,” in *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. N. Christie (Aldershot, 2004), 163–93; J. Henning, ed., *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. 2, *Byzantium, Pliska, and the Balkans* (Berlin, 2007); J. L. Bintliff, “The Contribution of Regional Surface Survey to Byzantine Landscape History in Greece,” in *Exempli Gratia: Sagalassos, Marc Waelkens and Interdisciplinary Archaeology*, ed. J. Poblome (Leuven, 2014), 127–39.

1 See H. Schliedermann, “The Idea of the Town: Typology, Definitions and Approaches to the Study of the Medieval Town in Northern Europe,” *World Archaeology* 2, no. 2 (1970): 115–27; N. Christie and S. T. Loseby, eds., *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late*

Various tools and theoretical frameworks have been combined for the visualization, analyses, syntheses, and discussion of these data and issues. Geographic information systems (GIS), especially viewshed and cost-surface analyses, have been employed to map the survey data and investigate the spatial relationship between sites and their surrounding landscape.³ The archaeological and spatial data are also examined using traditional theoretical approaches deriving from historical geography, such as central-place theory⁴ and settlement-chamber or community-area theory,⁵ concepts applied primarily by geographers and landscape archaeologists on the *poleis* landscapes of Greece,⁶ and

3 For a comprehensive presentation of GIS and archaeology, its methods and potential, see D. Wheatley and M. Gillings, *Spatial Technology and Archaeology: The Archaeological Applications of GIS* (London, 2002); J. Conolly and M. Lake, *Geographical Information Systems in Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2006).

4 The concept of central-place theory was developed in the 1930s by the German geographer Walter Christaller in order to examine the function of central places (such as urban centers) and the hierarchy of settlements for communication and industrial purposes. W. Christaller, *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (Jena, 1933). For a representative study on the imposition of a virtual central-place network in the territory of a medieval bishopric in Britain, see D. Austin, "Central Place Theory and the Middle Ages," in *Central Places, Archaeology and History*, ed. E. Grant (Sheffield, 1986), 95–103.

5 Like most geographical and settlement-analysis approaches, community-area theory was developed by geographers and archaeologists studying prehistoric landscapes who sought to identify how past communities (large main settlements and satellite establishments) interacted in a microregion defined within a radius of 2.5–5 kilometers around the main settlement. See M. Kuna, "The Structuring of Prehistoric Landscape," *Antiquity* 65 (1991): 332–47. For this and other theoretical landscape approaches, see E. Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes: A GIS-Based Study for the Reconstruction and Interpretation of the Archaeological Datasets of Ancient Boeotia* (Oxford, 2011), 3–14. Some of the methodologies and theoretical approaches applied in my own case study owe much to Farinetti's groundbreaking work on Boeotian landscapes in antiquity.

6 Many of these and other related geographical approaches have been employed widely on the landscapes and territorial boundaries of *poleis* in Boeotia by Bintliff in the framework of the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project. See J. L. Bintliff, "Settlement and Territory," in *The Companion Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, ed. G. Barker (London, 1999), 1:505–45; idem, "Settlement and Territory: A Socio-Ecological Approach to the Evolution of Settlement Systems," in *Human Ecodynamics: Proceedings of the Association for Environmental Archaeology Conference 1998 Held at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne*, ed. G. Bailey, R. Charles, and N. Winder (Oxford, 2000), 21–30; idem, "Issues in the Economic and Ecological Understanding of the *Chora* of the Classical *Polis* in Its Social Context: A View from the Intensive Survey Tradition of the

occasionally by Byzantinists (led by Johannes Koder),⁷ in order to test information deriving from documentary sources, monuments, excavations, and surface surveys.

The aim is to examine whether settlement hierarchies existed in the Byzantine provinces and to identify bishopric and community territories in Boeotia and their relationship to settlement evolution at the macro- and microregional scale, taking into account ecological and topographic factors as well as social and historical variables. Finally, the continuity, survival, or relocation of Byzantine settlements will be discussed in the context of memory and identity in an attempt to conceptualize changes that occurred during transitional phases in settlement history, from the early Middle Ages and the period of Byzantine sovereignty to the era of Latin/Frankish control.⁸

Greek Homeland," in *Surveying the Greek Chora: Black Sea Region in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. P. Guldager Bilde and V. F. Stolba (Aarhus, 2006), 13–26.

7 Incidentally, Johannes Koder has applied central-place and -location theories on several occasions in the geographical regions of Boeotia, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. See J. Koder, "The Urban Character of the Early Byzantine Empire: Some Reflections on a Settlement Geographical Approach to the Topic," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (New Rochelle, NY, 1986), 155–87; idem, "Παρατηρήσεις στην οικιστική διάρθρωση της κεντρικής Μικράς Ασίας μετά τον 6^ο αιώνα: Μια προσέγγιση από την οπτική γωνία της 'θεωρίας των κεντρικών τόπων'," in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th–12th cent.)*, ed. S. Lampakis (Athens, 1998), 248–49, 251–55; idem, "Για μια εκ νέου τοποθέτηση της εφαρμογής της θεωρίας των κεντρικών τόπων: Το παράδειγμα της μεσοβυζαντινής Μακεδονίας," in *Historical Geography: Roads and Crossroads of the Balkans from Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. E. P. Dimitriadis, A. P. Lagopoulos, and G. Tsotsos (Thessalonike, 1998), 33–49; idem, "Land Use and Settlement: Theoretical Approaches," in *General Issues in the Study of Medieval Logistics: Sources, Problems and Methodologies*, ed. J. F. Haldon (Leiden, 2006), 178–81.

8 In our case study, "memory" is investigated in terms of how people in the region under investigation may have perceived or remembered previously inhabited neighboring sites, such as late antique towns or Byzantine villages, and what role such sites and sights may have played in their postclassical daily understanding of urban and rural territories. For a discussion on issues of memory and settlement continuity in various regions of Boeotia, see J. L. Bintliff, "Deconstructing 'The Sense of Place'? Settlement Systems, Field Survey, and the Historic Record: A Case-Study from Central Greece," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 66 (2000): 123–49. Generally, for more theoretical and postprocessual approaches to landscapes and memory, see C. Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments* (Oxford, 1994); W. J. Darby, *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of Nation and Class in England* (Oxford, 2000); C. Holtorf and H. Williams, "Landscapes

Landscape Archaeology in a Byzantine Context

In the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, the term “landscape” is combined with “bucolic imagery” in monumental and miniature painting, including mountains, rocks, caves, trees, and other vegetation.⁹ Contemporary landscape archaeology, however, incorporates the study of built space, such as fortifications, religious and domestic architecture, temporary rural constructions, and field boundaries.¹⁰ These elements played a vital role in the daily life of past societies. Although there is a tendency among historians to overlook material culture as an additional means through which one can build up the cultural history of a specific region, historical geography in the past and landscape research in recent years have finally been incorporated into Byzantine studies.¹¹

Ever since landscape studies and spatial analysis (of both artifacts and sites) entered the field of New Archaeology more than forty years ago,¹² archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, and geographers have worked together to explain through surface surveys how and why complex settlement systems developed in

the Greek landscape.¹³ Traditionally, landscape archaeology examines the spatial relationships of artifacts and features in order to infer the past use of landscape and the interrelationships between natural and cultural processes.¹⁴ Intensive surface surveys in particular, which have been employed in the Mediterranean since the 1960s, involve systematic field-walking in a pre-determined pattern, first within large transects and then in smaller grids, and the counting and sampling of surface potsherds, noting at the same time traces of architectural features. The density of finds from different periods is then mapped onto an area plan and inferences are drawn concerning the scale of occupation, the character of sites, and their relation to the topography and other major monuments or features.¹⁵

The ability of archaeological survey to identify, date, and interpret concentrations of surface potsherds in the Byzantine landscape has occasionally been challenged.¹⁶ It is true that many previous

and Memories,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*, ed. D. Hicks and M. C. Beaudry (Cambridge, 2006), 235–54; N. Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500–1800* (Oxford, 2009).

9 “Landscape and Bucolic Imagery,” *ODB* 2:1173–74.

10 For the term “landscape” and different theoretical frameworks, see A. B. Knapp and W. Ashmore, “Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational,” in *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. W. Ashmore and A. B. Knapp (Oxford, 1999), 1–30; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 3–5; G. Papantoniou, *Religion and Social Transformations in Cyprus: From the Cypriot Basileis to the Hellenistic Strategos* (Leiden, 2012), 74–79.

11 For only some of the major publications in the field of Byzantine historical geography and landscape research, see J.-P. Sodini, “La contribution de l’archéologie à la connaissance du monde byzantin (IV^e–VII^e siècles),” *DOP* 47 (1993): 139–84; Dunn, “From Polis to Kastron”; J. L. Bintliff, “Reconstructing the Byzantine Countryside: New Approaches from Landscape Archaeology,” in *Byzanz als Raum: Zu Methoden und Inhalten der historischen Geographie des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes*, ed. K. Belke, F. Hild, J. Koder, and P. Soustal (Wien, 2000), 37–63; Sanders, “Rural and Urban Settlement”; N. P. Kardulias, *From Classical to Byzantine: Social Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Fortress at Isthmia, Greece* (Oxford, 2005); J. Koder, “Land Use and Settlement.”

12 I. Hodder and C. Orton, *Spatial Analysis in Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1976); D. L. Clarke, ed., *Spatial Archaeology* (London, 1977).

13 J. F. Cherry, J. L. Davis, and E. Mantzourani, *Landscape Archaeology as Long-Term History: Northern Keos in the Cycladic Islands from Earliest Settlement until Modern Times* (Los Angeles, 1991); M. H. Jameson, C. N. Runnels, and T. H. van Andel, *A Greek Countryside: The Southern Argolid from Prehistory to the Present Day* (Stanford, 1994); C. Mee and H. Forbes, eds., *A Rough and Rocky Place: The Landscape and Settlement History of the Methana Peninsula, Greece* (Liverpool, 1997); W. Cavanagh, J. Crowell, R. W. V. Catling, and G. Shipley, eds., *Continuity and Change in a Greek Rural Landscape: The Laconia Survey*, vol. 1, *Methodology and Interpretation* (London, 2002); J. L. Bintliff, P. Howard, and A. M. Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland: The Work of the Boeotia Survey (1989–1991) in the Southern Approaches to the City of Thespiai* (Cambridge, 2007); J. L. Davis, ed., *Sandy Pylos: An Archaeological History from Nestor to Navarino*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 2008).

14 C. Gosden, *Anthropology and Archaeology: A Changing Relationship* (London–New York, 1999), 153; T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London, 2000), 199. For an up-to-date account of the history of landscape studies, see Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 3–14.

15 The bibliography on archaeological survey methodology is too extensive to cite here. For a recent and concise overview, see J. L. Bintliff, “Intra-site Artefact Surveys,” in *Good Practice in Archaeological Diagnostics: Non-invasive Survey of Complex Archaeological Sites*, ed. C. Corsi, B. Slapšak, and F. Vermeulen (Heidelberg, 2013), 193–200.

16 For example, Sanders has rightfully questioned survey collection strategies and the ability of inexperienced survey personnel to recognize and collect pottery fragments dated to the period after the end of late antiquity, and even the ability of some researchers to create a reliable assemblage seriation (and consequently accurate dating of sites) on the basis of a few diagnostic imported decorated wares and a mass of undiagnostic body sherds. See Sanders, “Rural and

interpretations of postclassical settlement continuity and transformation are now unreliable as a result of the revision of ceramic chronologies. One may be justifiably critical of conclusions resulting from surveys of Byzantine and medieval landscapes designed and undertaken by prehistorians and classical archaeologists, for whom the distribution of Byzantine material was a peripheral concern. We should not overlook the fact, however, that it was prehistorians and classical archaeologists who first opened the way to our understanding of Byzantine society and its material culture beyond Constantinople and Thessalonike.¹⁷ Another much-debated issue is the fact that the study of settlement evolution and human activity in the landscape throughout the postclassical period in Greece has been heavily reliant on environmental, economic, and geographical approaches, placing emphasis on land use, resource exploitation, and rural settlement topography. This is easily explained, however, as settlement archaeology grew out of New Archaeology, itself characterized by the use of generalizing models, an ecological framework, and processual approaches in general.¹⁸ On the other side of this ongoing debate, theorists in Byzantine studies often turn their back on material culture, or pay it little attention, leaving part of the story untold.

Urban Settlement,” 163–68. Laiou, was also cautious (as a historian) about survey archaeology and excavation and noted that archaeological data alone can provide “erroneous interpretations, or no interpretations at all” about the rise and function of rural settlements; A. E. Laiou, “The Byzantine Village (5th–14th Century),” in *Les Villages dans l’Empire byzantin (IV^e–XV^e siècle)*, ed. J. Lefort, C. Morisson, and J.-P. Sordini (Paris, 2005), 35. Dunn, however, recognizes both the limitations and the accomplishments of survey archaeology; A. Dunn, “Continuity and Change in the Macedonian Countryside from Gallienus to Justinian,” in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, ed. W. Bowden, L. Lavan, and C. Machado (Leiden, 2004), 568–69.

17 The published results of the Argolid Exploration Project by Jameson, Runnels, and van Andel, the Laconia Survey by Cavanaugh and Crowell, the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project by Davis, and, last but not least, the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project by Bintliff and Snodgrass, have supplemented on several occasions the work of prominent Byzantinists such as that of Haldon, Koder, Laiou, and others. See nn. 2, 7, and 16 for respective bibliography.

18 For a thorough account of current theoretical and methodological issues on medieval landscapes in Greece, see E. F. Athanassopoulos and L. Wandsnider, “Mediterranean Landscape Archaeology: Past and Present” and E. F. Athanassopoulos, “Historical Archaeology of Medieval Mediterranean Landscapes,” both in *Mediterranean Archaeological Landscapes: Current Issues*, ed. E. F. Athanassopoulos and L. Wandsnider (Philadelphia, 2004), 6–8 and 84–87.

The topic of settled landscapes is complex. Crisis, abandonment, colonization, prosperity, and relocation, as well as *mentalités*, anthropogenic forces, cultural values, and memory, were important factors that led to crucial changes and transformations within the Byzantine settlement system. These changes have been poorly understood by Byzantinists; the main reason for our inability to draw a more accurate picture has been our reliance on the patchy documentary record, on the mapping of standing or ruined churches on a regional scale, and, at best, on extensive archaeological surveys over vast territories.

Moving beyond these issues, the contribution of landscape archaeology to Byzantine studies to date should be stressed. The value of intensive survey remains immense, as evidence for human activity in the Byzantine landscapes of Greece has been carefully documented, providing another dimension to the archaeological exploration of the Byzantine provinces, away from the major urban sites and monuments that have always attracted the attention of art and architectural historians. The strengths of intensive survey were noted already in the late 1970s and 1980s by archaeologists specializing in the Byzantine period.¹⁹ The potential of such surveys to examine specific regions, providing detailed information about the location of sites and their character, size, and shape, and to investigate what was going on outside the walls of towns and cities in order to appreciate the dynamics of Byzantine society, was particularly emphasized.

The Projects of Bocotia

The archaeological data (mainly surface ceramics and architectural structures) and preliminary results discussed here derive from an ongoing study (as well as many seasons of archaeological fieldwork) made possible through my collaboration with two major

19 T. E. Gregory, “Intensive Archaeological Survey and Its Place in Byzantine Studies,” *EtByz* 13, no. 2 (1986): 155–61. Even more admirably, in his discussion about the characteristics and methodologies of interdisciplinary regional survey, Rosser noted that “what we need to understand, and will never understand from the literary sources, is how the land was organized, the way it was actively exploited and the potentialities and limitations of agricultural production. . . . Byzantine archaeology has the potential to explore these problems of Byzantine agrarian history.” J. H. Rosser, “A Research Strategy for Byzantine Archaeology,” *EtByz* 6 (1979): 156.

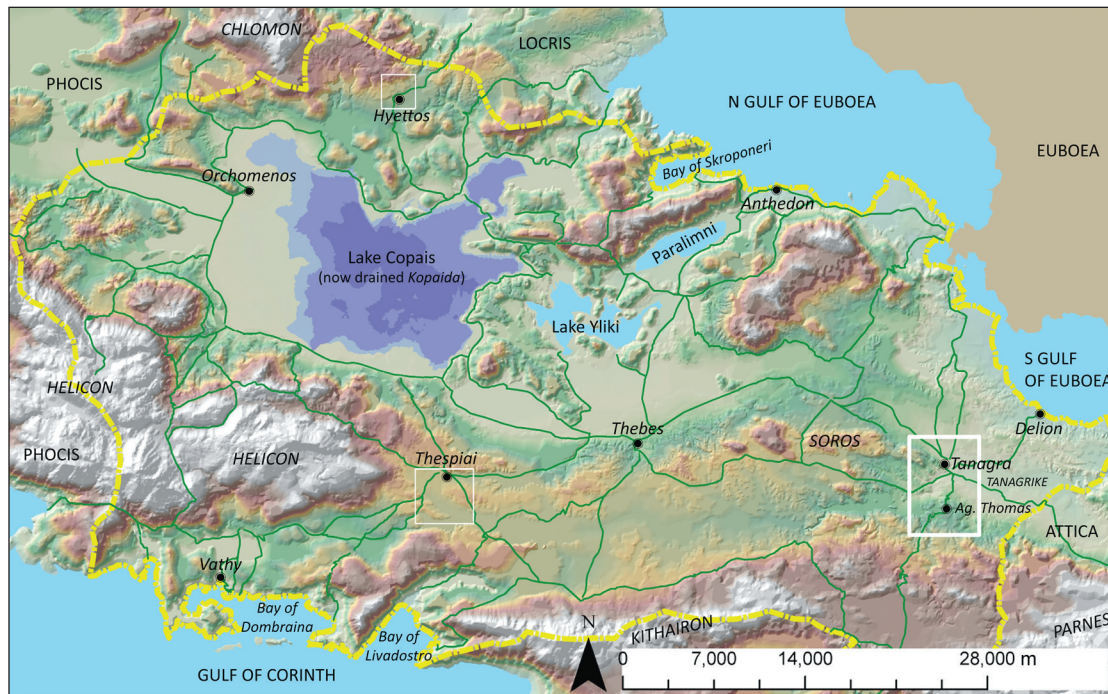


Fig. 1.
The geography
of Boeotia with
places mentioned
in the text (DEM
and GIS mapping
by Emeri Farinetti)

survey projects in the province of Boeotia over the past fifteen years.

Firstly, primary data derive from the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project, an intensive surface-survey program at the ancient city site of Tanagra and its immediate territory, the *Tanagrike*, close to the east coast of Boeotia (fig. 1). This project, directed by John Bintliff (Leiden University) and Božidar Slapšak (University of Ljubljana), took place between 2000 and 2005.²⁰ The site of Tanagra (approximately thirty

hectares in size) was fully surveyed, with the collection of surface ceramics,²¹ architectural plotting, and geophysics. Results concerning activity outside the city walls also derive from intensive field-walking. The aim was to identify loci of activity of all forms in the *Tanagrike* by field-walking in all directions out from the city wall.²²

20 The ceramics from within and outside the walls of the town were analyzed by a team of specialists covering each era from pre-history to postmedieval times. I am most grateful to the directors for our collaboration and for granting me the opportunity to lay my hands upon the Byzantine and post-Byzantine material collected during the course of this project. A number of publications have resulted so far from the project, while the data and analyses concerning all periods from the survey area will be included in a collective volume. For preliminary results and syntheses, see J. L. Bintliff et al., "The Tanagra Project: Investigations at an Ancient Boeotian City and in Its Countryside (2000–2002)," *BCH* 128–29 (2004–5): 541–606; J. L. Bintliff, E. Farinetti, K. Sarri, and R. Sebastiani, "Landscape and Early Farming Settlement Dynamics in Central Greece," *Geoarchaeology* 21, no. 7 (2006): 665–74; P. Bes, J. Poblome, and J. L. Bintliff, "Puzzling over Pottery: Thespieae, Tanagra and Methodological Approaches toward Surface Ceramics," in *Old Pottery in a New Century: Innovating Perspectives on Roman Pottery Studies*, ed. D. Malfitana, J. Poblome, and J. Lund (Catania, 2006),

339–45; J. L. Bintliff and B. Slapšak, "Tanagra: La ville et la campagne environnante à la lumière des nouvelles méthodes de prospection, par les universités de Leyde et de Ljubljana," in *Tanagras: De l'objet de collection à l'objet archéologique*, ed. V. Jeammet (Paris, 2007), 101–15; A. K. Vionis, "Current Archaeological Research on Settlement and Provincial Life in the Byzantine and Ottoman Aegean: A Case-Study from Boeotia, Greece," *Medieval Settlement Research* 23 (2008): 28–41; J. L. Bintliff and B. Slapšak, "Tanagra: A Survey of the City," in *Tanagras: Figurines for Life and Eternity: The Musée du Louvre's Collection of Greek Figurines*, ed. V. Jeammet (Paris, 2010), 30–31.

21 This involves laying out a regular grid across the surface, counting the total density of potsherds on the ground, and the systematic collection of ceramics from each grid square.

22 Surface pottery densities within these transects were recorded using manual counters by field-walkers spaced at equal distances from each other. Extramural transects were walked up to two kilometers, and intensive survey along the fertile rolling hills to the south and southeast was also undertaken, as continuous extensions of the transects in the valley below.

Secondly, published results and the architectural and ceramic data from a previous intensive survey by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project in the ancient city sites (and their immediate environs) of Thespiiai in central Boeotia and Hyettos in the northern sector of the prefecture (fig. 1) have been used here as comparanda. This project took place in the 1980s and 1990s under the direction of John Bintliff (then at Durham University) and Anthony Snodgrass (Cambridge University).²³

Finally, some of the details concerning the digital reconstruction of Byzantine churches and medieval towers in Boeotia derive from the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Boeotia Digitization Project, which I initiated in 2010. The recording and three-dimensional reconstruction of Byzantine and post-Byzantine sites and monuments was carried out with the aid of advanced technical equipment.²⁴ Some of the images that accompany this article derive from this project.²⁵

23 Since that time, the city site of Thespiiai has been restudied by the Ljubljana team of the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project, led by Slapšak (geophysics and architectural survey), while the ceramics from the city have been restudied by pottery specialists. The results and analysis of the extramural survey and data were published in a monograph in 2007. See Bintliff, Howard, and Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland* (n. 13 above). The intensive survey within the city site itself is currently being prepared for publication as a monograph in the same series. Although the survey at the city site of Hyettos was also completed in the 1990s, a restudy of the ceramic finds, which began in 2010, is now completed. An architectural survey has also been carried out recently, while geophysical work is currently being conducted in collaboration with Apostolos Sarris (Foundation for Research and Technology, Hellas).

24 The architectural recording of Byzantine, late medieval, and postmedieval monuments in the areas of Tanagra, Agios Thomas, and Haliartos in Boeotia was undertaken with a permit (2011) from the Directorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities (Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism). I am grateful to Dr. N. Kontogiannis (archaeologist of the 23rd Ephorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities), and Dr. E. Gerousi (Head of the Directorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities) for their support and collaboration. This technical equipment forms the main tool of ArtLandS Lab (Artefact and Landscape Studies Laboratory), a mobile laboratory that I designed in the context of a start-up grant from the University of Cyprus (2010–12).

25 Chiara Piccoli (Leiden University), Chrystalla Loizou (University of Cyprus), and Katerina Ragkou (University of Cologne) served as specialists on this project. Piccoli, with the assistance of Loizou, prepared the 3-D reconstructions of Byzantine churches and Frankish towers, while Ragkou was engaged with the 3-D reconstruction of two very important sites in the region. Niki Kyriacou (University of Cyprus), whose contribution was immensely helpful, assisted us in the GIS mapping of the Byzantine sites. I am deeply

The Setting of the *Tanagrike*

The present-day prefecture of Boeotia lies between the Gulf of Corinth in the west and the Gulf of Euboea in the east (fig. 1). It is characterized by large, mostly inland plains renowned for their fertile clay-rich soils and abundance of water: the plain of the *Tanagrike* in eastern Boeotia, with the river Asopos flowing eastward and emptying into the Gulf of Euboea; the plain of Thebes in central Boeotia, drained by the river Thespius (modern Kanavari) to the west and the Ismenus to the east; and the plain of Orchomenos, drained by the river Cephissus. The large plain known today as Kopaida in the center of Boeotia used to be a marshy lake (Lake Copais) of two hundred square kilometers until its drainage at the end of the nineteenth century. The mountain ranges of this vast region define, more or less, its geographical boundaries: to the south, the Kithairon and Parnes separate Boeotia from Attica; to the west, Helicon defines the border between Boeotia and Phocis; and to the north, Chlomon forms a territorial marker between Boeotia, Phocis, and part of Locris. As control of this landscape (especially in the south) in periods of dispute between Boeotia and Attica was under constant negotiation, the term “boundary” is relative.²⁶

Recent studies have suggested that ports in the Gulf of Corinth, especially Vathy in the bay of Dombraina, comprised the “Empire’s principal radial axis of communication” with the West.²⁷ Good harbor facilities existed, however, on both coasts of Boeotia, including, most importantly, the harbor of Tanagra at Delion (Dilesi), eight kilometers to the northeast of

grateful to all of them for our collaboration, their hard work, and their patience while preparing the relevant visual material.

26 For a typical case study examining the political and physical boundaries of Attica and Boeotia in the Skourta plain, see M. H. Munn, “Εν μεθορίοις της Αττικής και της Βοιωτίας,” *Α’ Διεθνές Συνέδριο Βοιωτικών Μελετών, Θήβα, 10–14 Σεπτεμβρίου 1986*, ed. A. P. Bekiaris (Athens, 1988), 363–71. The ancient political and physical boundaries of Boeotia are also the subject of a recently published study involving the application of GIS; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes* (n. 5 above), 48–49.

27 A. Dunn, “The Rise and Fall of Towns, Loci of Maritime Traffic, and Silk Production: The Problem of Thisvi-Kastorion,” in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. E. M. Jeffreys (Cambridge, 2006), 45. Dunn provides a fascinating analysis of the function of the bay of Dombraina and the status of the nearby ancient city site of Thisbe during the early and middle Byzantine era.

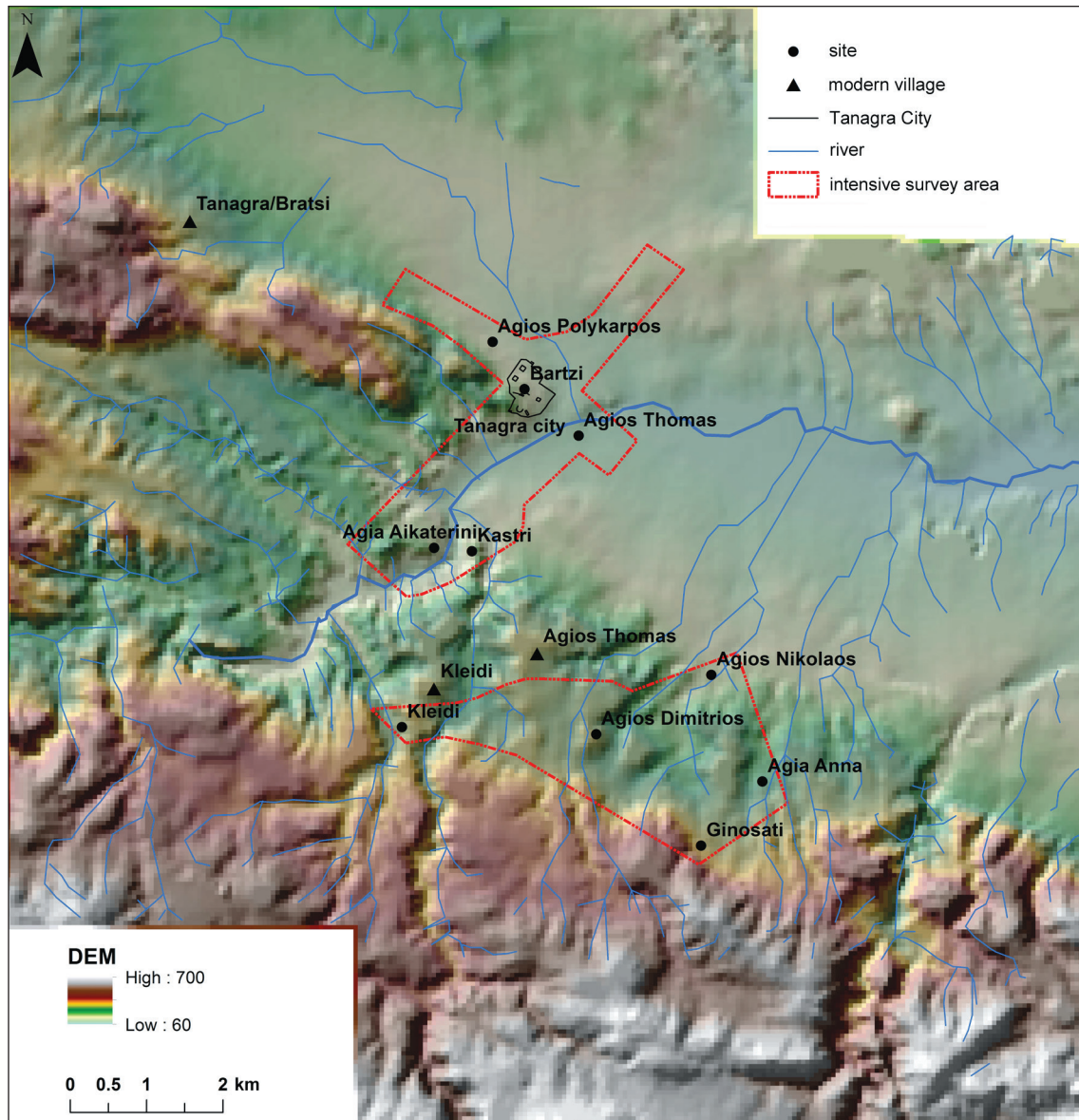


Fig. 2. The areas of the *Tanagrike* intensively surveyed by the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project (DEM and GIS mapping by Niki Kyriacou)

the ancient site, and Anthedon, the harbor of Thebes (until the end of late antiquity), twenty-three kilometers northeast of the city, both in the Gulf of Euboea. Anthedon seems to have preserved its ancient name down to the twelfth century, as Eustathios of Thessalonike informs us.²⁸ Thebes, the capital of

Boeotia until recently, has been the most important town in central Greece since the Mycenaean period. It is recorded as an autocephalous archbishopric in the eighth century²⁹ and, along with neighboring regions of Boeotia, was probably part of the theme of Hellas

28 *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis: Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes, ad fidem codicis Laurentiani*, ed. M. van der Valk (Leiden, 1971–87), 1:402, lines 21–22; A. Dunn, “Historical and Archaeological Indicators on Economic Change in Middle Byzantine Boeotia and Their Problems,” in *Β' Διεθνές Συνέδριο Βοιωτικών*

Μελετών, Λιβαδειά, 6–10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1992, ed. A. Ch. Christopoulou (Athens, 1995), 762.

29 J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1981), notitia 2.79; Dunn, “Historical and Archaeological Indicators,” 757.

already in the late seventh century.³⁰ Thebes gradually became a center of silk trade, surpassing Constantinople in silk production by the twelfth century.³¹

The territory around the ancient city site of Tanagra (close to Attica) is characterized by an irregularly shaped red-soil plain, one of the most fertile regions of Boeotia.³² The wider territory of the *Tanagrike* is separated from the plain of Thebes by the Soros hills to the west, while the city site itself lies on one of the lower slopes to the east. The Asopos runs less than a kilometer south of the city, and apparently functioned as one of the borders between Boeotia and Attica. It is believed to have been one of the few navigable water routes of Boeotia that gave access to the sea.³³

The landscape of the *Tanagrike* that is the focus of this study is generally comprised of plains; the only rolling hills in this area are situated to the south and southeast of the city site, in the region of the present-day village of Agios Thomas (formerly Liatani), where the extramural transects were extended for intensive survey (fig. 2). The lowland *Tanagrike* is today predominantly cultivated with cereals, vines, and cotton, while the upland valleys and rolling hills of the Agios Thomas area consist of olive groves, cereal fields, and pastureland.

Christianization in Late Antiquity

The distinction between “urban” and “rural” space is a complex issue in the context of the shrinkage and sometimes abandonment of late antique city and town sites, beginning in the mid-/late sixth century. This section examines changes and transformations of settled spaces

from a not purely economic perspective.³⁴ One of the decisive factors of change within late antique urban space was the Christianization of the cityscape, which took place between the late fourth and sixth centuries.³⁵ The question is, what comprises an urban environment and defines a “city” and its topography between the late fourth and sixth centuries? Drawing on written sources of the period, such as Procopius,³⁶ it has been suggested that the status of a *polis* in the sixth century was defined by the presence of large public amenities (aqueducts, cisterns, baths, public buildings, churches, and fortification walls), areal extent, population size, and the level of commercial activity, while the natural environment and topography largely determined the location and layout of the city.³⁷ The city, as argued by Koder, served as an administrative, economic, and cultural/cultic center for the surrounding countryside, “as intermediary to superior centers.”³⁸

34 A. K. Vionis, “The Topography of Christianisation in the Byzantine Cityscape of the Southern Illyrikon,” in *Problèmes de topographie urbaine en Méditerranée byzantine*, ed. A. Nicolaïdes (Aix-en-Provence, in press).

35 A series of scientific conferences and workshops and many more publications have appeared over the past ten to fifteen years, dealing with those changes that occurred throughout the troubled early Middle Ages in much of the Roman Empire, both in the west and in the east. For a general introduction to the archaeology of the period, with further bibliography, see G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar, eds., *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World* (London, 2001); J.-M. Spieser, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001); L. Lavan and W. Bowden, eds., *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology* (Leiden, 2003); Christie, *Landscapes of Change* (n. 2 above); C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005); H. G. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality* (Athens, 2006); L. Lavan and M. Mulryan, eds., *The Archaeology of Late Antique “Paganism”* (Leiden, 2011).

36 ἔπειτα δὲ στοαῖς τε καὶ ἀγοραῖς αὐτὴν διακρίνας, καὶ διελὼν μὲν τοῖς στενωποῖς ἀμφόδους ἀπάσας, ὁχετοὺς δὲ καὶ κρήνας καὶ ὑδροχόας καταστησάμενος, ὅσοις ἢ πόλις κεκόμψευται, θέατρά τε αὐτῇ καὶ βάλανεία πεποιημένους, καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις δημοσίαις οἰκοδομίαις ἀπάσας κοσμήσας, αἷσπερ εὐδαιμονία διαφαίνεσθαι πόλεως εἴωθε. Procopius, *On Buildings*, ed. H. B. Dewing (London, 1940), 170–71, 2.10.22.

37 B. Bavant, “La ville dans le Nord de l’Illyricum,” in *Villes et peuplement dans l’Illyricum protobyzantin: Actes du colloque organisé par l’École française de Rome (Rome, 12–14 mai 1982)*, (Rome, 1984), 246; E. Zanini, “The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning in Byzantine New Cities of the Sixth Century AD,” in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and Practice*, 198–99.

38 Koder, “Urban Character” (n. 7 above), 157.

30 P. Charanis, “Hellas in the Greek Sources of the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Centuries,” in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann (Princeton, 1955), 173–75; F. R. Trombley, “Early Medieval Boeotia (c. 580–1050 AD),” in *Γ’ Διεθνές Συνέδριο Βοιωτικών Μελετών, Θήβα, 4–8 Σεπτεμβρίου 1996*, ed. V. Th. Aravantinos (Athens, 2000), 991.

31 Interestingly, Michael Choniates comments on the silk-weaving “Corinthian and Theban fingers.” *Μιχαήλ Ακομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. S. P. Lambrou (Athens, 1879–83), 2:83, no. 50:10, lines 18–19.

32 R. J. Buck, *A History of Boeotia* (Edmonton, 1979), 4; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes* (n. 5 above), 210.

33 Trombley, “Early Medieval Boeotia,” 990. This is a very important piece of information and a scenario I am currently investigating in connection with issues of ceramic production and economic dynamics in this region and in the Byzantine provinces in general during the middle and late Byzantine periods (see below).

In Tanagra itself, the abundance of LRA2 transport amphorae (dated between the late fourth and early/mid-seventh centuries) identified during the surface survey suggests that the city enjoyed a relative degree of prosperity during late antiquity and that it was an important regional economic center, especially for the production of olive oil and its distribution to the military *annona*.³⁹ Thus, one would expect considerable investment in the appearance of the city after the establishment of Christianity in the area by the fifth century. Indeed, excavations carried out in 1890 revealed the remains of a Christian basilica (forty by twenty meters) with mosaic floors of the fifth century at the highest point of the city (on the southwest corner of the city wall), presumably on the site of an ancient temple (fig. 3 no. 1).⁴⁰

Geophysical prospection at Tanagra in 2005 brought an unexpected discovery regarding the size of the classical town in relation to its size in late antiquity. Until then, it was believed that the standing wall circuit, enclosing some thirty hectares, was a late antique rebuild of the classical town wall along its original wall lines. Geophysical survey, however, showed that the urban street grid and house blocks of the classical period continue beyond the northern (outer) face of the wall (fig. 3). This late antique walling of a reduced area of the classical city of Tanagra is a familiar phenomenon encountered elsewhere in Greece, for example at Athens and Corinth.⁴¹

It seems that Tanagra was still a busy town of thirty hectares in the fifth and sixth centuries, suggesting a considerable population size. Many streets and buildings remained aligned with the original fourth-century BC street and city plan, and both geophysical prospection and architectural survey have confirmed that a number of classical Greek houses were transformed into impressive elite residences in Roman times and in late antiquity.⁴²

A number of totally new (and Christian) architectural features are also to be seen. The Upper Agora, a ridge in the central-western part of the town (fig. 3 no. 2), was dramatically altered with the erection of a large basilica church over part of its open space, and on a different alignment to pagan structures.⁴³ Another three-aisled basilica to the east-southeast of the town (fig. 3 no. 4), with an annex to the northwest and architectural fragments and church furniture scattered across its surface, was identified through geophysics,⁴⁴ while a building in between these two churches has been identified as a possible baptistery or a bath (fig. 3 no. 3). These structures testify to the almost complete takeover of the cityscape by signifiers of the Christian faith and the institution of the Church. A Christian funerary inscription found in Tanagra (dated to the first half of the sixth century) commemorates a certain Lucian, an artisan of the building trades,⁴⁵ and refers to urban building activity and the construction of at least

39 Most LRA2 amphora fragments from within the walled area of the city as well as from its hinterland seem to be of local/regional fabrics. The study of the late Roman ceramics was undertaken by Philip Bes and Jeroen Poblome. See Bes, Poblome, and Bintliff, "Puzzling over Pottery" (n. 20 above), 339–45. The preliminary study of the late Roman pottery from the city of Tanagra has convinced specialists that the LRA2 group of combed amphorae should not be considered as products linked to patterns of export targeted at Constantinople; rather, LRA2 amphorae are a regional Boeotian product, and were dominant within this region. Bintliff et al., "Tanagra Project" (n. 20 above), 568.

40 D. D. Konstas, "Ἀνασκαφαὶ Τανάγρας," *Πρακτ. Αρχ. Ετ.* (1890): 34.

41 J. L. Bintliff, "The Leiden University Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project: 2005 Season at Tanagra," *Pharos* 13 (2006): 35–38. A further observation comes from the plots just inside the northeast wall, where no *insulae* were observed; a large open area, partly cut in two by the late rewalling, is now considered to be a Lower Agora, to complement the Upper Agora previously identified in the southwest of the upper city. For the cases of Athens and

Corinth, see A. Frantz, *Late Antiquity, A.D. 267–700* (Princeton, 1988), 49; G. D. R. Sanders, "Corinth," in *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. E. Laiou (Washington, DC, 2002), 648–49; idem, "Rural and Urban Settlement" (n. 2 above), 179.

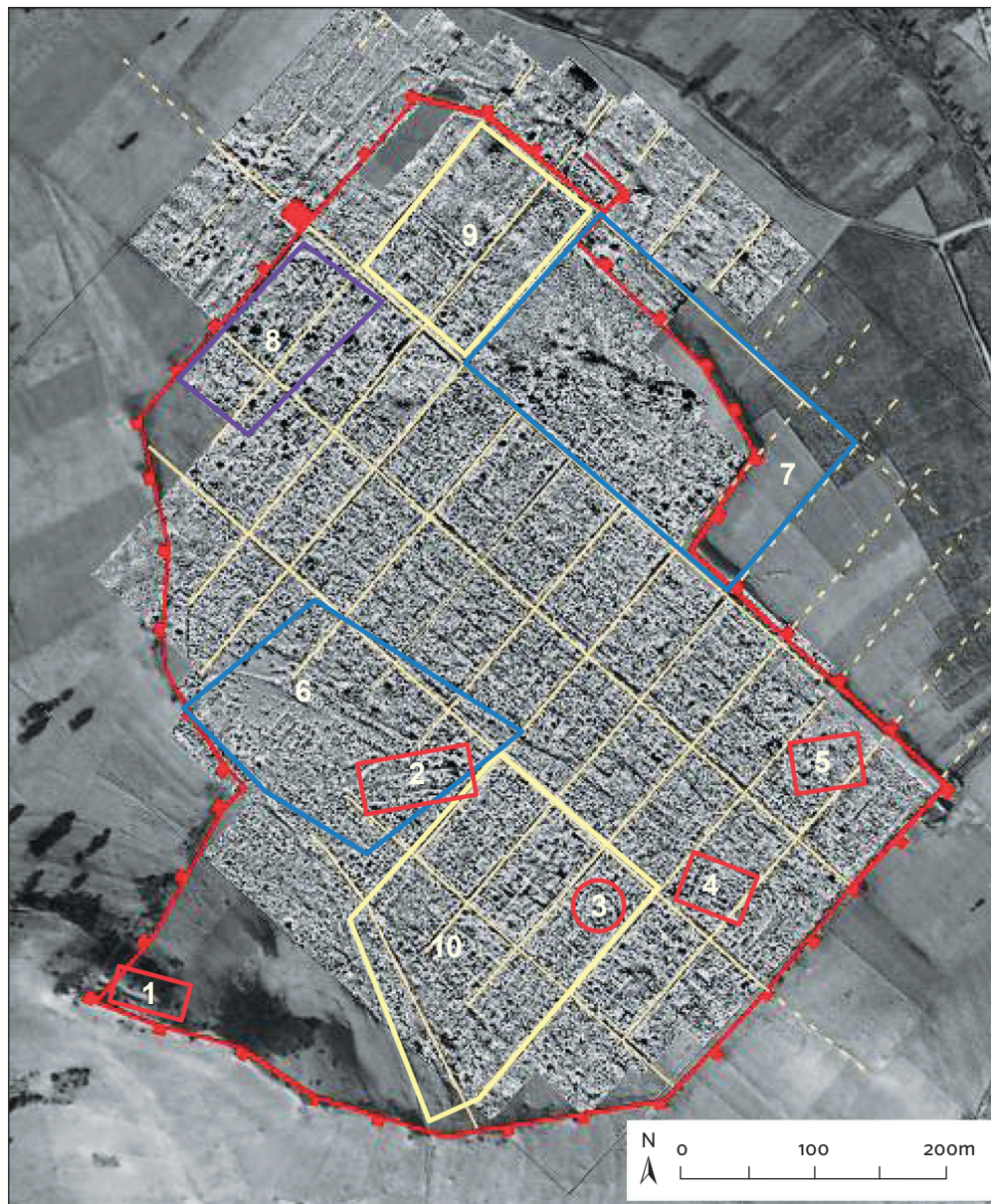
42 Bintliff and Slapšak, "La ville et la campagne" (n. 20 above), 104.

43 J. L. Bintliff et al., "The Leiden-Ljubljana Tanagra Project: The 2003 Season," *Pharos* 11 (2004): 37–38.

44 Bintliff, "2005 Season at Tanagra," 34.

45 *IG VII.1648*; F. R. Trombley, "Boeotia in Late Antiquity: Epigraphic Evidence on Society, Economy, and Christianization," in *Boiotika: Vorträge vom 5. Internationalen Bötien-Kolloquium zu Ehren von Professor Dr. Siegfried Lauffer; Institut für Alte Geschichte, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 13.–17. Juni 1986* (Munich, 1989), 224. Two more Christian funerary inscriptions from Tanagra dated to the early fifth century speak of the deceased in the old Ionic dialect and suggest a syncretism of Christian and pagan Hellenic ideas. This syncretism is believed to reflect the Hellenic *paideia* (rather than a purely religious syncretism) that prevailed by that period even in agrarian regions such as Boeotia. See *ibid.*, 226 and A. K. Vionis, "The Balkan Peninsula: Achaia and the Greek Islands," in *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration*

Fig. 3.
The late antique city of
Tanagra. A numbered
area in red marks
religious spaces, in blue
marks public, in purple
marks industrial, and in
yellow marks semipublic.
1 = excavated basilica;
2 = Agora basilica;
3 = possible baptistery or
bath; 4 = east basilica;
5 = possible basilica;
6 = Upper Agora /
public space; 7 = Lower
Agora / public space;
8 = Industrial area;
9 = lower town /
semipublic area;
10 = upper town /
semipublic area (photo
courtesy of the Ancient
Cities of Boeotia Project)



three basilicas and a potential baptistery in Tanagra at this time.

The Christianizing urban layout of Tanagra is paralleled in other regions of the Byzantine Mediterranean, such as Cyprus, Asia Minor, and North Africa. In the fifth and sixth centuries, monumental churches, such as the basilica in the Upper Agora of Tanagra, began encroaching on traditional

urban centers. At Tanagra, this ecclesiastical structure occupied part of the public area of the town, dominating the townscape and at the same time fitting into the town's layout. Indeed, the alignment of streets, building blocks, and houses was respected to a great extent throughout late antiquity. Thus, most (if not all) of the *polis* characteristics that Procopius refers to have been revealed in Tanagra through the use of nondestructive survey techniques.

If early Christian basilicas (or the institutions they represented) played a role in urban change, what,

across Cultures and Continents, ed. W. Tabbernee (Grand Rapids, MI, 2014), 339–40.

more precisely, was that role and their economic relationship with the surrounding rural environs in the sixth and early seventh centuries? The archaeological evidence noted above leads us to a rather important point regarding the role and identity of intramural churches in these new cityscapes. They should be seen as functional alternatives to the traditional urban centers: the Greek agora or the Roman forum. This idea of the church as an economic and urban focus is not new; it is, however, a model that now appears to apply also to Tanagra and Thespiiai in Boeotia.

In Tanagra, for instance, the Upper Agora was overtaken by a massive basilica. The rest of the open space to the northwest of the church remained untouched, with large quantities of LRA2 amphorae pointing toward the economic or commercial character of public spaces around focal churches. Moreover, ceramic wasters have been identified on the Upper Agora and in the central-northern sector of the city, along with kilns, possibly associated with late antique and postmedieval ceramic industry at the site (fig. 3 no. 8).⁴⁶ In Thespiiai, the fifth-century city wall encircled an area of only twelve hectares, overlying the old forum of the town, while an extramural, unfortified settlement of almost thirty hectares was identified to the east through intensive survey.⁴⁷ Both areas in Thespiiai bear traces of intense late antique human activity, and include the contemporary remains of Christian basilicas. Even more interestingly, evidence for ceramic and metallurgical production from within the walled area of Thespiiai, and presumably among built structures such as basilicas, reinforces the argument for an immediate relationship between production and the Church.⁴⁸ It appears that churches in both urban

contexts and surrounding territories had become, by the sixth century, the social and commercial/economic centers of the community. In sum, the position of early Christian basilicas in the urban grid served as a prominent reference point for both the institution and its financial resources, and as Wataghin has pointed out, the desire for visibility proved crucial for the appearance of monumental Christian architecture.⁴⁹

The city, certainly smaller and Christian by the time of Justinian, was not independent of its immediate environment, in the sense of either a suburban area or an agricultural zone with its satellite establishments. As the archaeological evidence cited above suggests, and has been pointed out by other scholars, the sixth-century city kept its administrative, ecclesiastical, defensive, and sometimes military character and function.⁵⁰ This is reflected in the urban topography of central and southern Greece, and cannot be separated from the boom in rural activity in surrounding urban territories throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. These two parts of the jigsaw puzzle are best investigated by reference to both texts and archaeology. Ancient sources speak about the city's streets, fountains, and glorious monuments, built on hills and

46 The ceramic material from the kilns' area is still under study. Initial results indicate a late antique and postmedieval date. John L. Bintliff, Jeroen Poblome, pers. comm.

47 According to Bintliff, the estimated size of the town of Thespiiae in classical and early Hellenistic times was approximately seventy hectares, shrinking to some forty hectares in late antiquity (including both the walled area of the town and the extramural settlement). See J. L. Bintliff, "Central Greece in Late Antiquity: The Evidence from the Boeotia Project," in *Field Methods and Post-Excavation Techniques in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Leiden, 2013), 191, 195.

48 Another site where evidence for industrial and artisanal production has been identified is Messene. The area of the ancient theater was occupied by a basilica (built of local in-situ material), a limekiln, and a workshop for the extraction and processing of

ancient building material by specialized craftsmen. See N. Tsivikis, "Πού πάνε οι πόλεις, όταν εξαφανίζονται; Ο οικισμός της πρώιμης και μέσης βυζαντινής Μεσσήνης," in *Οι βυζαντινές πόλεις (8^{ος}–15^{ος} αιώνες): Προοπτικές της έρευνας και νέες ερμηνευτικές προσεγγίσεις*, ed. T. Kiousopoulou (Rethymno, 2012), 62–69. Evidence for industrial production (kilns, kiln wasters, kiln supports, and slag), and apiculture (ceramic beehives dated to the sixth century), has been identified also within the fortress of Hexamilion at Isthmia, although the finds indicating specialized production point toward metalwork there, which seems to have been associated with a military presence rather than the Church itself. See T. E. Gregory, *Isthmia*, vol. 5, *The Hexamilion and the Fortress* (Princeton, 1993), 47; Kardulias, *From Classical to Byzantine* (n. 11 above), 83–84. Another interesting point arises from the rural interior of Naxos, where the basilica of Gyroulas and its predecessor, the archaic temple of Demeter, seem to have been the religious focus of villages scattered over the valley from the late Geometric period to the seventh or eighth centuries AD. The first phase of the temple's conversion is placed in the late fifth or early sixth century, while the second one is dated around the mid-sixth century, followed by the installation of kilns and workshops for pottery, lamp, oil, and wine production. See E. Semantone-Bournia, ed., *Νάξος: Το αρχαίο ιερό του Γύρουλα στο Σαγκρί* (Athens, 2001), 27–31.

49 G. Cantino Wataghin, "Christian Topography in the Late Antique Town: Recent Results and Open Questions," in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and Practice* (n. 35 above), 230.

50 Koder, "Urban Character" (n. 7 above), 157; Zanini, "Urban Ideal" (n. 37 above).

providing excellent views for visitors and inhabitants throughout pagan antiquity.⁵¹ From the late fourth to the sixth century, city leaders (e.g., a secular elite, bishops) redirected investment from the construction of impressive secular public buildings to the construction of churches. Procopius, when referring to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, connects the church with the city, the former beautifying and dominating the latter, in the same way that a temple or a watchtower would once have done.⁵² Churches, and the institution they represented, were not isolated religious monuments in urban centers; they served as powerful statements of a dominant Christian identity and comprised a network of sacred spaces in towns and countryside, defining property, agricultural zones, and economies.

It is evident that, as political control at the local level shifted from imperial families to Christian ones (such as local governors, bishops), the urban and rural landscape and topography changed accordingly. As in the case of Corinth, Christian churches marked communication routes and borders on the edge of city walls and in the countryside, as pagan shrines had done before.⁵³ None of this would have been possible unless the Church (that is, the bishops) controlled wealthy lands in the late antique countryside. After all, urban life in the fifth and sixth centuries still depended on a network of roads, towns, and rural establishments. Changes in cityscapes and their surrounding environs

in late antiquity and later did not, furthermore, take place overnight; the procedure was a long one, starting in the fifth and sixth centuries, and local factors, local politics, and the growing influence and power of the Church had a major role to play.

“Urbanization” in Late Antiquity

Ongoing surface surveys in northern, central, and southern Greece have confirmed vigorous activity in fifth- and sixth-century towns, as well as intensive land use in the surrounding countryside. Detailed work in Boeotia, more specifically, has revealed that the immediate environs of ancient cities between the late fourth and mid-seventh centuries were filled with isolated villas, hamlets, and villa-hamlets (clusters of rural villas).⁵⁴ Despite the dark picture of destructions, invasions, and natural disasters provided by the textual sources, a similar pattern of settlement continuity and thriving rural communities (living in farms, hamlets, and small villages) has emerged after systematic surveys in other regions, such as Keos,⁵⁵ eastern Corinthia,⁵⁶ and Pylos.⁵⁷ Archaeological evidence within the city of Thespiiai and its territory in Boeotia suggests that these rural or extraurban establishments were seasonally occupied estates, and the town, apart from a small “central-place” role focused on the elite and comprised of rich estate owners, may have been home primarily to a dependent labor force tied to large estates in the *chora*.⁵⁸

This is an important piece of information, as it explains the preservation of the aesthetics within cities and the parallel gradual shrinkage in urban space. The settlement pattern, as revealed through intensive survey, throws light on the conditions within the walls of these old city centers and their immediate environs

51 “Ὡς εἰπὼν παράμειβε δι’ ἄστεος ὄμμα τιταίνων· καὶ οἱ ὀπιπεύοντι λιθογλώχινες ἀγνυαὶ / μαρμαρυγὴν ἀνέφαινον ἀμοιβαίῳ μετᾴλλον· / καὶ προγόνου δόμον εἶδεν Ἀγῆνορος, ἔδρακεν αὐλὰς / καὶ θάλαμον Κάδμοιο, καὶ ἀρπαμένης ποτὲ νύμφης / Εὐρώπης ἀφύλακτον ἐδύσατο παρθενεῶνα, / μνήστιν ἔχων κερρόντος ἐοῦ Διός· ἀρχηγόνους δὲ / πηγὰς θάμβεε μᾶλλον, ὅπη χθονίου διὰ κόλπου / νάματος ἐκχυμένου παλινάγρετον εἰς μίαν ὥρην / χεύμασιν αὐτογόνοισι πολυτρεφὲς ἔβλυεν ὕδωρ. Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, ed. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA, 1942), 3:178–79, bk. 40, lines 353–62; H. G. Saradi, “Beholding the City and the Church: The Early Byzantine *Ekphraseis* and Corresponding Archaeological Evidence,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ.* 24 (2003): 32.

52 Θέαμα τοῖνον ἡ ἐκκλησία κεκαλλιστευμένον γεγένηται, τοῖς μὲν ὁρώσιν ὑπερφυές, τοῖς δὲ ἀκούουσι παντελῶς ἄπιστον· ἐπῆρται μὲν γὰρ ἐς ὕψος οὐράνιον δόσον, καὶ ὥσπερ τῶν ἄλλων οἰκοδομημάτων ἀποσαλεύουσα ἐπινένευκεν ὑπερκειμένη τῇ ἄλλῃ πόλει, κοσμοῦσα μὲν αὐτήν, ὅτι αὐτῆς ἐστίν, ὡραῖζομένη δέ, ὅτι αὐτῆς οὐσα καὶ ἐπεμβαίνουσα τοσοῦτον ἀνέχει, ὥστε δὴ ἐνθένδε ἡ πόλις ἐκ περιωπῆς ἀποσκοπεῖται. Procopius, *On Buildings*, 12–13, 1.1.27; Saradi, “Beholding the City,” 34–35.

53 R. M. Rothaus, *Corinth, the First City of Greece: An Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion* (Leiden, 2000), 99–104.

54 Bintliff, Howard, and Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland* (n. 13 above), 155–66.

55 Cherry, Davis, and Mantzourani, *Landscape Archaeology* (n. 13 above).

56 D. K. Pettergrew, “The Busy Countryside of Late Roman Corinth: Interpreting Ceramic Data Produced by Regional Archaeological Surveys,” *Hesperia* 76 (2007): 743–84.

57 J. L. Davis et al., “The Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, Part I: Overview and the Archaeological Survey,” *Hesperia* 66 (1997): 474–75.

58 Bintliff, Howard, and Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland*, 164; Bintliff, “Central Greece in Late Antiquity,” 194.

in late antiquity, at least down to the seventh century. Had the survey been extensive instead of intensive, we might have been able to see a broader picture of settlement patterns in Boeotia as a whole, but we would have missed these relatively small, artifact-rich extramural sites (composed mostly of roof tiles and storage vessels), particularly as there are no other visible surface remains in the largely rural territory of Thespiiai. Any conclusions about settlement patterns and urban behavior in late antiquity without the evidence for those satellite establishments would be largely irrelevant. In short, what this suggests about “urban” and “rural” space is that the first does not exclude the second, and that there is no division between the two. Already from the sixth and seventh centuries, the center was directly connected with the countryside, largely dependent on it, and interacting with it on a daily basis.

Moving back to our case study, we find that the archaeological record in the extramural area of Tanagra includes foci of late antique activity in locations that have a different topography than extramural sites of the preceding periods, suggesting changes in the exploitation of agricultural land. Classical farm sites, for example, were usually located on hill slopes, while owners of Roman and late antique villas preferred valley floors.⁵⁹ Other changes concern site size and distance from the walled area of the town, which seem to testify to a different system of landed property.⁶⁰ The surface finds that define and characterize these late antique sites in the periphery of Tanagra, interpreted mainly as villa estates, include architectural fragments (such as fluted column drums), window glass, fragments of mosaic floors, abundant roof tile fragments, transport amphorae, and large storage *pithoi*, but virtually no fine or tablewares. The ceramic material itself suggests that these sites were used primarily for storage and secondarily for seasonal habitation by workers and farm supervisors within the lower valley surrounding the town. As John Bintliff has recently argued, the location of this network of late antique villa and hamlet sites in lowland moist soils suggests that these communities and commercial estates specialized in the production of wine and olive oil, focusing on a market

wider than Tanagra itself.⁶¹ The picture is similar to that at Thespiiai (briefly discussed above), where the highly specialized economy of the sixth and early seventh centuries was driven by an agricultural labor force commuting between a half-deserted town and its suburban villas.

Given the archaeological evidence and the interpretation offered above, where should we draw the line between town and countryside, if town walls did not exist? A straightforward answer would be that there is probably *no* distinction to be made, and there is definitely *no* line to be drawn. As argued above, city (*polis*) and countryside (*chora*) were two inseparable notions and entities, “mutually complementary in the development of the territory of the city,” as Cécile Morrisson and Jean-Pierre Sodini have noted in the case of urban populations in the eastern Mediterranean.⁶² Thus, there is no point in distinguishing “urban” and “rural” activity, or in trying to identify and categorize settlement types. What we are dealing with is a single community of people, living within walled spaces and in their periphery, involved in both agricultural and industrial production, and recognizing the walled area of Tanagra as their “local center,” with an ecclesiastical, administrative, probably military, and economic infrastructure. There were many of these local centers in Boeotia during late antiquity, as there were in other regions of Greece and Asia Minor. Moreover, given the distance between extramural establishments and the walled area itself, which ranged between six hundred and two thousand meters, one cannot interpret this pattern otherwise.

Obviously, such settled spaces never acquired the status of their provincial capital/metropolis (Corinth in the case of the province of Hellas),⁶³ but their function as primary local centers or local first-rank settled spaces should be recognized.⁶⁴ The specialized

59 Bintliff et al., “Tanagra Project” (n. 20 above), 546–47.

60 Bintliff, “Central Greece in Late Antiquity,” 195.

61 Idem, “Prosperity, Sustainability, and Poverty in the Late Antique World: Mediterranean Case Studies,” in *Production and Prosperity in the Theodosian Period*, ed. I. Jacobs (Leuven, 2014), 322.

62 C. Morrisson and J.-P. Sodini, “The Sixth-Century Economy,” in Laiou, *Economic History of Byzantium*, 175.

63 J. Koder and F. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, TIB 1 (Vienna, 1976), 52.

64 According to John Haldon, what defined a city and preserved its status in the seventh century were its defensive properties and its relevance to military, administrative, or ecclesiastical needs. See J. Haldon, “Production, Distribution and Demand in the Byzantine

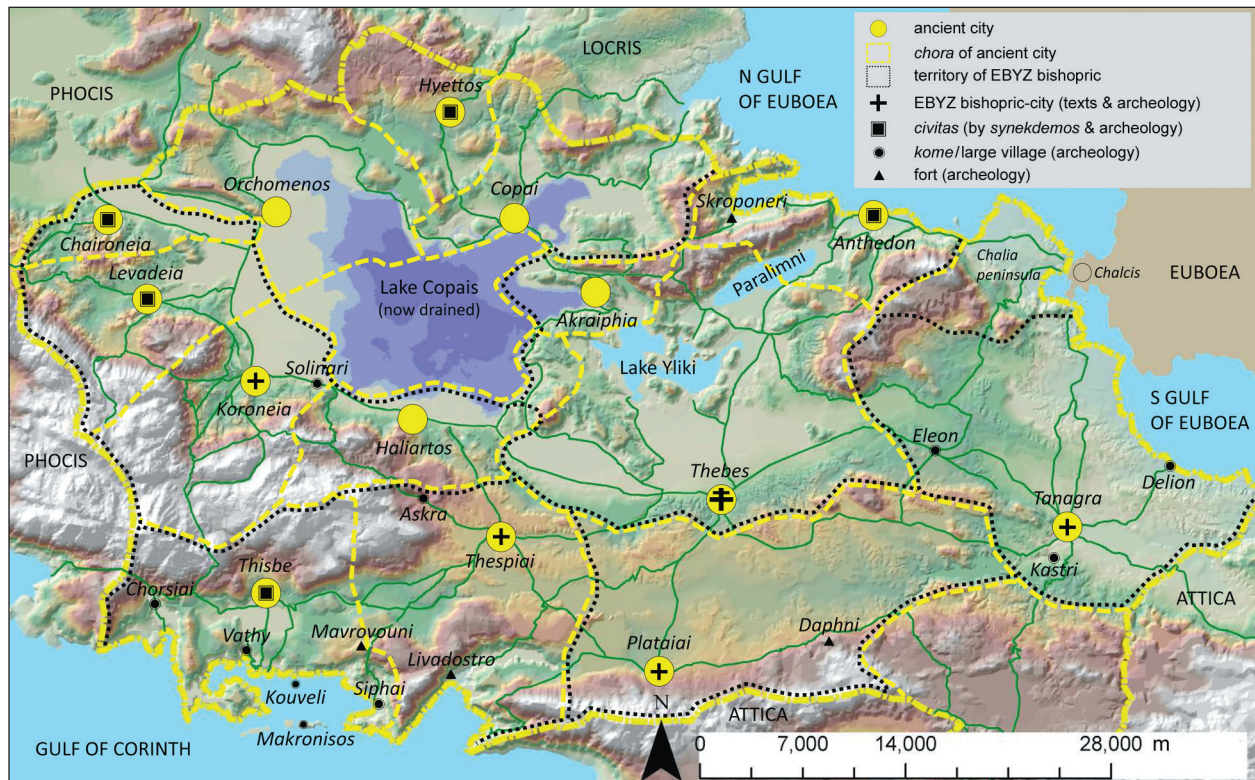


Fig. 4. Boeotia in late antiquity (DEM and ancient city territories by Emeri Farinetti, data by the author)

production of agricultural products (wine, oil, grain) and, to some extent, artisanal industry has been proven in the case of the late antique cities and their territories; thus, the notion of “urbanism” seems relatively certain here. As Chris Wickham has argued in the case of production and demand in cities and their territories, peasants almost always had a subsistence base, but were also involved in the processing of primary production.⁶⁵ The fact that we are dealing with sites located in a relatively sparsely settled landscape does not preclude the involvement of their inhabitants (permanent or seasonal) in industry and craft specialization. In the territory of Sagalassos in inland Asia Minor, for example, a number of extramural sites, located between eight and twenty kilometers from the

city, have produced evidence for ceramic production and metallurgical activities.⁶⁶

This evidence for secondary production outside fortified spaces of city status takes us to another form of settlement, though not one located in the immediate *chora* of Tanagra. Two such sites have been identified in the wider region of the *Tanagrike*: the ancient walled site of Eleon (ten kilometers northwest of Tanagra) and the harbor and settlement at ancient Delion (Dilesi) (eight kilometers northeast of Tanagra; fig. 4).⁶⁷

World, c. 660–840,” in *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, ed. I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham (Leiden, 2000), 229.

65 C. Wickham, “Overview: Production, Distribution and Demand, II,” in Hansen and Wickham, *The Long Eighth Century*, 373.

66 A kiln near Bağsaray (twenty kilometers southwest of Sagalassos) produced coarse wares of the second half of the sixth century, while at Tekeli Tepe (eight kilometers southeast of the late antique city) an important metalworking site of the seventh century has been identified. H. Vanhaverbeke, F. Martens, M. Waelkens, and J. Poblome, “Late Antiquity in the Territory of Sagalassos,” in Bowden, Lavan, and Machado, *Late Antique Countryside* (n. 16 above), 262.

67 A third site of this level in the hierarchy of settlement systems has been identified in the *chora* of Tanagra, on the hill of Kastri, two kilometers southwest of the city. Although evidence for human activity at Kastri dates as early as the sixth century AD, the site will

According to Farinetti's evaluation of the archaeological data from the region, a late antique settlement within the walled area of ancient Eleon, together with another focus of activity nearby, interpreted as a cemetery or a villa with burial space, formed a *kome* or large village that never reached city status (despite the pretentious character of its fortification wall).⁶⁸ The term *kome* is used here to define a secondary late antique settlement (without a bishop), usually of nucleated character and sometimes fortified, with a strong agricultural focus or involvement in small-scale industrial and commercial activities, and located within the *territorium* and administratively (and ecclesiastically) dependent on a local center.⁶⁹

Delion, on the other hand, on the eastern coast of Boeotia, has revealed more interesting remains. It was another *kome* of the wider *Tanagrike*, functioning as the harbor of Tanagra since Hellenistic and Roman times. There is further evidence for a substantial settlement with remains of a *stoa*, baths, and commercial complexes of the Roman era, as well as a late antique cemetery on the hill of Agrilesa and a workshop producing LRA2 amphorae (with associated kilns and storage areas).⁷⁰

be discussed in the following section, as it seems to continue as a fortified center for this region into the seventh and eighth centuries.

68 Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes* (n. 5 above), 218, 220. The results of the ongoing excavation of the Canadian Institute at Eleon will certainly shed more light on the dating and character of the site.

69 M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI^e au XI^e siècle: Propriété et exploitation du sol* (Paris, 1992), 90–95.

70 Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 215, 217, 220. For the LRA2 workshop excavated at Delion, see E. Gerousi, "A Late Roman Workshop at Dilesi in Boeotia," in *LRCW4: Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean; Archaeology and Archaeometry. The Mediterranean: A Market without Frontiers*, ed. N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, E. Nodarou, and V. Kilikoglou (Oxford, 2014), 2:193–202. The remarkable quantity of LRA2 fragments found in Tanagra, which represent one main fabric, suggests an even stronger connection between the late antique city and its harbor in terms of primary production and commercial activities. See J. Poblome, P. Bes, and R. Willet, "Thoughts on the Archaeological Residue of Networks: A View from the East," in *Rome, Portus and the Mediterranean*, ed. S. Keay (London, 2012), 394–95. For the late antique cemetery, see K. Chamilaki, "Ταφικά σύνολα υστερορωμαϊκών χρόνων από νεκροταφείο στο Δήλιον Βοιωτίας: Πρώτες παρατηρήσεις," in *Κεραμική της ύστερης αρχαιότητας από τον ελληνικό χώρο (3^{ος}–7^{ος} αιώνας μ.Χ.)*, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi and D. Kousoulakou (Thessalonike, 2010), 2:580–609.

Both of these settled spaces (the first inland and the second coastal) comprised dense settlements comparable to a small town or a large village, and were located at the crossroads of regional land and sea routes. Eleon linked Tanagra and Attica to the southeast with Thebes and to the northwest with Boeotia, while Delion communicated both with the primary *civitas* of Tanagra and its rural hinterland, and with the outside world by participating in a wider economic and cultural exchange network. Such *komai* maintained a pretentious urban character, with fortification walls, extensive cemeteries, basilica churches, and either a considerable extent of fertile land or a good harbor, or both. They presumably constituted settlements of a lower level, what we would term "secondary local centers" or "local second-rank" settled spaces.⁷¹ Although such places never acquired a complete urban look or function, they substituted for cities on a local level, providing human labor for agriculture or using their harbors to promote the products of their (sometimes) marginal territories. The existence and development of satellite seafront *komai* such as Delion, alternatively known as *emporia*, played a major role during the era of urban transformation in the seventh and eighth centuries.⁷²

It is worth looking at the distribution of known major settlements on a regional scale throughout Boeotia in late antiquity in order to understand the spatial dimension of settled landscapes in this region of the province of Hellas. Primary and secondary local centers (as defined above) are shown in figure 4 in relation to their topography and to the territories or *chorai* of Greco-Roman cities.⁷³ Bearing in mind

71 Morrisson and Sodini, "Sixth-Century Economy," 179–81.

72 Having been inspired by Polanyi's term "ports of trade," Hodges used *emporia* in order to explain the development of coastal and riverine trading settlements from the seventh to ninth centuries in northern Europe. K. Polanyi, "The Economy as Instituted Process," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, ed. K. Polanyi, C. M. Arensberg, and H. Pearson (Glencoe, IL, 1957), 234–70; R. Hodges, "Ports of Trade in Early Medieval Europe," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 11 (1978): 97–117; idem, "The Evolution of Gateway Communities: Their Socio-economic Implications," in *Ranking, Resource and Exchange: Aspects of the Archaeology of Early European Society*, ed. C. Renfrew and S. Shennan (Cambridge, 1982), 117–23.

73 Two published GIS maps of Boeotia, showing the location of ancient cities, their respective *chorai*, and physical routes within the region from west to east (see Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 229, fig. 5, and 257, fig. 32) have been combined and adjusted here for use as a base map in order to visualize the location of late antique (or

the political and territorial boundaries of ancient cities, we have attempted to visualize the territories of late antique bishopric-cities, which incorporated other cities, as well as settlements of lesser status, such as towns or large villages, according to both historical narratives and the archaeology of the region.⁷⁴ While the intention is not to trace continuities in settled spaces and settlement hierarchies from antiquity to the Byzantine era, one cannot ignore the fact that Byzantine culture was not an alien civilization but one that, with all its particularities and diversities, developed out of the values and institutions of the Greco-Roman tradition.

The cities of Koroneia, Plataiai, Tanagra, and Thespiiai are noted as episcopal sees of the fifth century in this region,⁷⁵ while Thebes formed the ecclesiastical

early Christian) towns, bishopric-cities, and their respective territories in comparison to ancient city-territories and in conjunction with the area's topography. For reasons of consistency, I have limited myself to the geographical region of Boeotia, as it was perceived in the classical Greek period. Farinetti has undertaken a tremendous task in determining each city's boundaries in the fourth century BC on the basis of topographical characteristics, the historical documentation, the archaeological record, land capacity, and land availability. Her work is of particular interest and value to my study in tracing continuities and changes in the settlement network from late antiquity onward. For the territories of cities situated around Lake Copais in the Roman period, see J. M. Fossey, "The Cities of the Kopais in the Roman Period," in *Papers in Boiotian Topography and History*, ed. idem (Amsterdam, 1990), 261, map 5.

74 The information about cities and bishoprics in the region derives primarily from E. Honigsmann, ed., *Le synekdhèmos d'Hiéròklès et l'opusculé géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Brussels, 1939) and Procopius, *On Buildings*; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*.

75 Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 192–93, 243–44, 267, 275. Our information about bishoprics in Boeotia in the fifth century derives mainly from participants' lists in synods, such as the ones at Ephesos in 449 and Chalcedon in 451, in both of which Domninos appears as the bishop of Plataiai (Δομνίνος Πλαταιῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδος and Δομνίνος ἐπ. Πλαταιέων). See E. Honigsmann, "The Original Lists of the Members of the Council of Nicaea, the Robber-Synod and the Council of Chalcedon," *Byzantion* 16, no. 1 (1942–43): 36, 56. Thespiiai is not noted as one of the early Christian bishoprics of Boeotia in *TIB*. I have, however, taken Thespiiai as one of the fifth-century episcopal sees of our region (*Episcopi Thespienses*) since Rufinus is listed as bishop of Thespiiai (*Rufinus episcopus Thespiensis*) in 458. In addition, the content of an epistle of Pope Leo I the Great (400–461) to the metropolitan of Achaia implies that a bishop had been appointed to the Thespians by that time. A. L. Tautu, *Acta Romanorum Pontificum a S. Clemente I (an. c. 90) ad Coelestinum III ([d.] 1198)* (Rome, 1943), 185–86, no. 72; M. Lequien,

metropolis of Boeotia.⁷⁶ Taking into account their status at this time as ecclesiastical centers from which bishops supervised their districts or dioceses, and considering that all five sites are included in Hierocles's list of "cities" of the province of Hellas in the sixth century, it is not hard to imagine that these Christianized places had acquired the administrative or central role (always at local level) of their classical and Roman predecessors.⁷⁷ The archaeological evidence from Thespiiai and, especially, Tanagra, discussed above, testifies to the fact that all five bishopric-cities preserved to a certain degree the physical appearance of cities: they were densely occupied by an elite as well as artisans, land supervisors, and workers; they comprised regional *civitates*; and they functioned, both economically and ecclesiastically, as centers for populations living and working in their immediate territories. It is important, however, to define such territories in order to better grasp settlement hierarchies in each of these regions and in the wider prefecture of Boeotia.

Considering the extent of ancient city-territories and the region's topography, we can propose, for example, that the episcopal see and city of Tanagra supervised more or less the same territory as in antiquity, possibly excluding the Chalia Peninsula facing Chalcis (which should have belonged to the bishopric of the neighboring city of Chalcis in Euboea).⁷⁸ Plataiai likely followed a similar pattern, while Thebes must have extended its control to the east coast in the northern Gulf of Euboea, to include its principal harbor and satellite town of Anthedon. Thespiiai and Thisbe are a different case. Dunn, and Gregory previously,⁷⁹ have successfully shown that places like Thisbe (an ancient

Oriens christianus, in quatuor patriarchatus digestus: Quo exhibentur ecclesiae, patriarchae, caeterique praesules totius Orientis (Graz, 1958), 2:211.

76 Θῆβαι μητρόπολις Βοιωτίας; Honigsmann, *Le synekdhèmos*, 17 (645.4).

77 Ibid., 17 (644.6, 645.2, 645.4, 645.5, 645.9).

78 For the determination of each bishopric's territory, I have not considered solely the boundaries of ancient *chorai*, but also Koder's postulation of central places in the region. See Koder, "Urban Character" (n. 7 above), fig. 9. It was necessary, however, to modify Koder's map not only on the basis of the area's topography (which Koder does not seem to have taken into account), but also on the basis of the archaeological evidence (see below).

79 Dunn, "Rise and Fall of Towns" (n. 27 above), 47, 50 and T. E. Gregory, "Archaeological Explorations in the Thisbe Basin," in *Boeotia Antiqua*, vol. 2, *Papers on Recent Work in Boiotian*

kome or secondary settlement in southwest Boeotia) did not decline or die in late antiquity but remained active in the middle of a busy territory, as is evident from fortifications, high-status buildings, tombs, and a specialized industry; Hierocles also includes it in his list of cities.⁸⁰ I would suggest, however, that in late antiquity the neighboring city and bishopric of Thespiiai absorbed the *territorium* of Thisbe, which retained its town status.⁸¹ Moreover, the population of Thisbe and its territory would have looked to its closest neighbor as a local market and ecclesiastical center; it seems logical that Thespiiai played this role, being the only superior settlement on the way to the secluded *territorium* of Thisbe. The same goes for Koroneia, which was the only city recorded as a bishopric in late antiquity in the whole area surrounding Lake Copais, and which must have functioned as the local focal point, despite the fact that Chaironeia and Levadeia are also listed as cities by Hierocles,⁸² and irrespective of their urban or nonurban appearance (fig. 4).

It is becoming more and more evident that extensive settlement activity continued—whether in “urban” or other form—in most of the ancient city sites into the sixth and seventh centuries. Interestingly, this was not the case with Haliartos, Orchomenos, Copai, and Akraiphia, where the latest evidence for major settlement activity is dated to the Roman period.⁸³ Apart

from the catastrophe caused by the Roman army in the case of Haliartos, other factors, such as the flooding of Lake Copais, may be partly to blame for those sites’ gradual disappearance.⁸⁴ According to archaeological evidence, life did continue at these sites, although it appears to have been restricted to the farming of a reduced land area (because of the lake’s flooding) by a workforce living in nearby farms and villas. This would have allowed city-bishoprics from surrounding areas to absorb these semiabandoned lands, meaning that the local populations would likely have perceived neighboring Thebes, Thespiiai, or Koroneia as their local ecclesiastical and economic centers. Late antique minor settlement activity identified in the former territories of Haliartos and Akraiphia may have been associated with Koroneia, Thespiiai, or Thebes, while minor sites in the former territories of Orchomenos and Copai may have been linked with Koroneia or Thebes; we cannot exclude, however, the possibility that the remaining lands on the northern and eastern shores of Lake Copais were exploited by populations associated with the bishopric-cities of Elateia in Phocis or Opus in Locris.⁸⁵ Finally, at Hyettos, although listed as another city (but not a bishopric) in the sixth century,⁸⁶ archaeological evidence suggests survival into the sixth and seventh centuries, but its overall size seems to have been reduced, while extremely confined activity around the former civic center has been identified by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project.⁸⁷ Hyettos must have likewise depended on some other local center, most possibly Opus to the north.

Archaeology and Epigraphy, ed. J. M. Fossey (Amsterdam, 1992), 22, 28–29, 33.

80 Honigmann, *Le synekdomos*, 17 (645.3b).

81 The fact that Siphai on the east coast of the *chora* of ancient Thisbe is attested in Stephanus Byzantius as “ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς Θεσπιακῆς” (port of the Thespian *chora*) provides further evidence for the incorporation of the *territorium* of Thisbe by Thespiiai in the sixth century. *Stephani Byzantii Ethniconum quae supersunt*, ed. A. Meineke (Berlin, 1849), 573.1.

82 Honigmann, *Le synekdomos*, 17 (643.11, 644.5).

83 The city of Haliartos, for example, was destroyed by the Romans in 171 BC and its territory was handed over to the Athenians. See Fossey, “Cities of the Kopais,” 236–37. The site of the ancient city was never reoccupied, or, at least, no major (urban-like) occupation dated after the second century AD was identified in the course of intensive surface survey by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project. J. L. Bintliff, “Pattern and Process in the City Landscapes of Boeotia from Geometric to Late Roman Times,” in *Territoire des cités grecques: Actes de la table ronde internationale organisée par l’École française d’Athènes, 31 octobre–3 novembre 1991*, ed. M. Brunet (Athens, 1999), 27, 30; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 149–50. Similarly, the classical/Roman city sites of Orchomenos,

Copai, and Akraiphia do not seem to continue as cities, towns, or even villages during late antiquity, according to the archaeological evidence, which is limited to a few late Roman burials, probably related to several identified neighboring farm or villa sites; *ibid.*, 292–93.

84 Fossey has argued that the decline of these cities sometime in the second century AD may be related to the flooding of the fields by the shores of Lake Copais, which resulted in the elimination of land available for cultivation, leaving no more than fishing to sustain the cities’ populations. Fossey, “Cities of the Kopais,” 231, 233.

85 Honigmann, *Le synekdomos*, 16 (643.8, 17, 644.8); Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia* (n. 63 above), 153–54, 227.

86 Honigmann, *Le synekdomos*, 17 (645.3a); Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 173.

87 Bintliff, “Pattern and Process,” 30; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes* (n. 5 above), 123–25.

Thus we should recognize the metropolis of Thebes and the bishopric-cities of Koroneia,⁸⁸ Plataiai,⁸⁹ Tanagra,⁹⁰ and Thespiiai⁹¹ as *civitates* throughout late

88 Recent survey work by the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project (2007–11) at ancient Koroneia has identified substantial traces of human activity dating from the early Iron Age to the late medieval period. According to Bintliff, archaeological exploration has revealed that Koroneia contracted during late antiquity, and was focused largely on the hilltop acropolis and within and in the vicinity of the ancient agora. However, the acropolis itself seems to have been rewallled at this time, while remains of a central public building comprising several small rooms have been interpreted as those of small shops/workshops or a large governor's residence in the late antique town. J. L. Bintliff et al., "The Leiden-Ljubljana Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project, 2010–2012 Seasons," *Pharos* 19, no. 2 (2013): 15–17. See also Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 192–93; J. M. Fossey, *Topography and Population of Ancient Boiotia* (Chicago, 1988), 324–30. Despite the contraction and small size of Koroneia as a late antique *civitas* confined within its wall and just beyond it, the presence of public buildings (whether shops/workshops or local government housing), evidence for rewalling, and the existence of a bishop in the fifth century (who also appears in the participants' list of the Council of Ephesos in 431), point to the rather elevated status of this provincial city.

89 Plataiai is another ancient city site in Boeotia which has been intensively explored through surface survey, in this case by an Austrian team in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities in Thebes. According to these investigations, the city contracted in late antiquity within the northwest acropolis and its environs to the southeast, as indicated by the presence of late antique burials within the ancient city-area. V. Aravantinos, A. Konecny, and R. Marchese, "Plataia in Boeotia: A Preliminary Report of the 1996–2001 Campaigns," *Hesperia* 72 (2003): 281–318; A. Konecny, V. Aravantinos, and R. Marchese, *Plataiai: Archäologie und Geschichte einer boiotischen Polis* (Vienna, 2013). However, evidence for the rewalling of Plataiai, attested both archaeologically and historically as part of Justinian's fortification program (and recorded in Procopius's *On Buildings*), remains of a large number of early Christian churches and of several public buildings and spaces within as well as outside the acropolis, an extensive nearby cemetery, and a bishop in the fifth century who participated at the Councils of Ephesos and Chalcedon in 449 and 451, indicate that this was another "primary local center" in late antiquity, with a distinctly urban identity and indirect imperial linkage.

90 The architectural evidence, including the remains of early Christian basilicas, and other indications for the urban character of Tanagra in late antiquity have been presented and discussed above.

91 Archaeological evidence from Thespiiai (edited volume in press), collected and evaluated by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project and the ceramic specialists of the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project, points to another interesting case of a late antique *civitas*. Dense concentrations of late antique surface ceramics within the so-called *kastro* or *Erimokastro* of Thespiiai (most probably a late antique rewalling of the ancient acropolis) and toward its northeastern and eastern sectors, indicate that the city contracted between the fifth

antiquity (from the fifth to the mid-seventh century), playing their role as primary local centers or local first-rank settled spaces within their respective *territoria*. On the other hand, the two following categories of secondary sites, noted on figure 4, namely (a) cities mentioned by Hierocles and identified through archaeology and (b) towns/large villages identified through archaeology, should be regarded as belonging to another type of settlement, that is, *komai* or settlements of a nucleated or (sometimes) dispersed nature. These secondary sites, which served as local second-rank settled spaces under the supervision of primary local centers, preserved some "urban" features, such as fortification walls, organized burial spaces, and some industrial or commercial activity, and were located at the crossroads of regional land or sea routes. The fact that intensive archaeological fieldwork at Hyettos has revealed only sparse activity around its former civic center in late antiquity and possibly a basilica,⁹² despite its identification as a city by Hierocles, reinforces the argument that settlements of civic status (as mentioned in the written sources) can in reality be of dispersed character, reduced in size, and with a strong agricultural focus, and thus equivalent to inland *komai* and seafront *emporía* with either a considerable extent of fertile land or a good harbor, or both. Apart from Eleon and Delion, other such second-rank settlements in Boeotia include Anthedon on the northern Gulf of Euboea and Thebes's primary port; Askra in the Valley of the Muses; Solinari close to Koroneia in central Boeotia; Levadeia and Chaironeia in western Boeotia; Chorsiai, Siphai, and Vathy in the territory of

and sixth centuries within the ancient acropolis and the Roman forum (as evidenced also by the distribution of late antique burials around this part of the site). Moreover, industrial debris (ceramic wasters and iron slag) was identified within the *kastro* area and its immediate environs, as well as evidence for an early Christian basilica church within the walled area, and three more in its eastern and northeastern sectors (the one in the far northeastern sector, below the post-Byzantine chapel of Agios Athanasios, was excavated by P. Lazarides in the 1970s). John L. Bintliff, Anthony Snodgrass, B. Slapšak, pers. comm. For the excavation of the Agios Athanasios three-aisled basilica, dated to the late sixth or early seventh century, see P. Lazarides, "Θεσπιαί: Ἁγίος Ἀθανάσιος," *Αρχ. Δελτ.* 28, B1 (1973): 286–87. This evidence suggests that Thespiiai bears all the hallmarks of a late antique contracted—yet busy—*civitas* with defense walls, industrial activity, religious monuments, extensive Christian cemeteries, and, last but not least, a bishop by 458. See n. 75 above.

92 Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 173.

Thisbe; and the islets of Kouveli and Makronisos in the bay of Dombraina.

Anthedon had been a flourishing harbor town during the classical and Hellenistic periods under the control of the territory's primary center of Thebes.⁹³ Excavations have revealed substantial remains of a late antique settlement here with a three-aisled basilica and good harbor installations (an *emporion*), dated to the sixth and seventh centuries at the site of Mandraki.⁹⁴

Askra had been a second-rank settlement and already a dependent *kome* (or large village) of the *polis* of Thespiiai since the Geometric period, while field-work by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project has revealed that the site shrank from the late Hellenistic to the middle Roman era but recovered fully in late antiquity.⁹⁵ The ruins of a middle Byzantine church are visible and the existence of an earlier church (an early Christian basilica?) on the same spot cannot be excluded. The concentration and distribution of surface ceramics show that Askra flourished as an agricultural town in the Valley of the Muses throughout late antiquity, while wasters of Red Slip Ware, identified by John Hayes, confirm the local production of decorated tableware in the sixth and possibly seventh centuries.⁹⁶

Solinari, less than five kilometers east of the bishopric-city of Koroneia, is an interesting case in that its archaeological remains suggest that in late antiquity the site succeeded the nearby ancient *kome* of Alalkomenai. Ancient Alalkomenai may represent a case similar to Askra, having been dependent on ancient Koroneia until its demise in the Roman

period.⁹⁷ Rescue excavations in the 1990s revealed part of a settlement and associated cemetery dated to the late antique period at Solinari, while previous excavations by Theodoros Spyropoulos uncovered the apse of a possible early Christian basilica by the nearby church of Saint John the Baptist.⁹⁸ Solinari must have been a large prosperous settlement throughout late antiquity, probably another local second-rank settled space, lying on the main axis of land communications between Thebes, Tanagra and Attica, and Koroneia and north-west Boeotia.

Levadeia, although included in Hierocles's list of cities in late antiquity,⁹⁹ must have remained a *kome* with an agricultural economy, situated along major land routes from Thebes to Delphi in Phocis. Archaeological investigations have brought to light portions of the late antique settlement as well as a number of structures and architectural sculptures identified as possibly belonging to an early Christian baptistry, confirming that the present-day town of Levadeia overlies the ancient town.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Chaironeia is listed as a city by Hierocles in the sixth century,¹⁰¹ but rescue excavations and surveys suggest it was only a small *polis* in Greek and Roman times and a *kome* by the late antique era, with evidence for a settlement and a three-aisled basilica.¹⁰² Chaironeia seems to have been oriented toward its immediate, fertile agricultural territory and the strategic opening between Phocis and Boeotia, and, very much like Levadeia, must have been a satellite town and a second-rank settlement in western Boeotia, looking to the bishopric-city of Koroneia as its primary local center.

Thisbe belongs to the same category of *komai* as Levadeia and Chaironeia, and, according to Dunn's

93 Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 201–6.

94 J. C. Rolfe, "Discoveries at Anthedon in 1889," *AJA* 6 (1890): 96–107; H. Schläger, D. J. Blackman, and J. Schäfer, "Der Hafen von Anthedon mit Beiträgen zur Topographie und Geschichte der Stadt," *AA* 83 (1968): 21–98; Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 250–57; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 123.

95 J. L. Bintliff, "Further Considerations on the Population of Ancient Boeotia," in *Recent Developments in the History and Archaeology of Central Greece*, ed. J. L. Bintliff (Oxford, 1997), 231–52; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 161.

96 J. L. Bintliff, "The Archaeological Survey of the Valley of the Muses and Its Significance for Boeotian History," in *La montagne des Muses*, ed. A. Hurst and A. Schachter (1996), 193–210; J. Vroom, *After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7th to the 20th Century A.C.: A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece* (Leiden, 2003), 137–39.

97 Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 78, 266.

98 Th. Spyropoulos, "Ειδήσεις εκ Βοιωτίας," *Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα ἐξ Αθηνών* 6, no. 3 (1973): 381–84; *Αρχ.Δελτ.* 49 (1994): 284–86; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 267–68.

99 Honigmann, *Le synekdèmos* (n. 74 above), 17 (644.5).

100 P. Etzeoglou, *Αρχ.Δελτ.* 20, B1 (1965): 240–41; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 200–201; Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 343–49; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 277–78.

101 Honigmann, *Le synekdèmos*, 17 (643.11).

102 G. Soteriades, "Untersuchungen in Boiotien und Phokis," *AM* 30 (1905): 117–18; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 138–39; Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 375–82; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 283–84.

detailed study of Thisbe/Kastorion, the transformation of the site into a defended settlement by the sixth century did not mean that it lacked all the features of a town.¹⁰³ As argued above, ancient and late antique Thisbe was another second-rank settlement or *kome* with a reconstructed late antique town wall and a possible basilica, dependent on neighboring Thespiiai, and connected to its harbor of Vathy in order to participate in long-distance trade.¹⁰⁴ The neighboring sites of Chorsiai to the west and Siphai to the southeast developed into towns in Greek and Roman antiquity, but cannot have exceeded the size of medium-sized settlements (large villages?) by late antiquity, as revealed by traces of late antique reconstruction of the fortification walls of Chorsiai and evidence for a settlement and harbor installations in the case of Siphai.¹⁰⁵

Vathy in the bay of Dombraina is another case similar to Anthedon and Delion. A series of walls parallel to the shore, together with large quantities of late antique pottery and evidence for nearby habitation, point to a carefully constructed harbor infrastructure and identify Vathy, Thisbe's primary port, as another coastal *kome* or *emporion* that provided this marginal territory in southwest Boeotia with access to a wide economic exchange network.¹⁰⁶

Finally, intensive field survey on the islets of Kouveli and Makronisos in the bay of Dombraina by Timothy Gregory has revealed large concentrations of pottery and extensive architectural remains from small late antique settlements, houses, a church, dock facilities, and industrial/storage areas.¹⁰⁷ Gregory has challenged Sinclair Hood's long-established view that offshore islets were used as refuges by Greek populations in the course of successive Slav invasions from the late sixth century, and provided firm evidence for the existence of flourishing *emporia* or ports of trade where goods were collected, loaded, and shipped to various

destinations by open communities of traders (rather than by small, closed groups of refugees).¹⁰⁸

We now turn to a third category of the built environment: forts. All settled sites referred to thus far are located on the edge of large inland plains and coastal valleys but never in liminal areas, rocky hills, and mountains between *poleis* territories. It is not a coincidence that classical and Hellenistic forts, of meticulous construction, protected territorial borders as well as important commercial and military passes.¹⁰⁹ Although forts do not constitute settled spaces as such—they provided temporary housing to military forces or small groups of guards or soldiers—they did comprise an important part of the ancient and late antique built environment. Evidence for the refurbishment of ancient forts or *phrouria* in late antiquity at several sites in Attica, namely Kynosoura, Panakton, and Phyle,¹¹⁰ points toward a continuing need for defense on behalf of provincial areas located on strategic land and naval routes, a phenomenon equivalent to

108 S. Hood, "An Aspect of the Slav Invasions of Greece in the Early Byzantine Period," *Sbornik Narodniho Musea v Praze* 20 (1966): 165–71; idem, "Isles of Refuge in the Early Byzantine Period," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 65 (1970): 37–45; T. E. Gregory, "Diporto: An Early Byzantine Maritime Settlement in the Gulf of Corinth," *Δελτ. Χρυστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* 12 (1984): 287–304; P. N. Kardulias, T. E. Gregory, and J. Sawmiller, "Bronze Age and Late Antique Exploitation of an Islet in the Saronic Gulf, Greece," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 22, no. 1 (1995): 3–21; A. K. Vionis, *A Crusader, Ottoman, and Early Modern Aegean Archaeology: Built Environment and Domestic Material Culture in the Medieval and Post-Medieval Cyclades, Greece (13th–20th Century AD)* (Leiden, 2012), 129.

109 The fourth-century BC fort of Eleutheraï is a characteristic example of such a construction, located on the borders of Attica and Boeotia and controlling a strategic pass to the Peloponnese, the Megarid, and Athens. J. Ober, *Fortress Attica: Defense of the Athenian Land Frontier, 404–322 BC* (Leiden, 1985), 119; idem, "Pottery and Miscellaneous Artifacts from Fortified Sites in Northern and Western Attica," *Hesperia* 56 (1987): 213–15.

110 J. Ober, *Fortress Attica*, 145–47; idem, "Pottery and Miscellaneous Artifacts," 205–7, 209–11, 226; M. Munn and M.-L. Zimmerman-Munn, "Studies on the Attic-Boiotian Frontier: The Stanford Skourta Plain Project, 1985," in *Boeotia Antiqua*, vol. 1, *Papers on Recent Work in Boiotian Archaeology and History*, ed. J. M. Fossey (Amsterdam, 1989), 38–39, 110; Ch. Kontogeorgopoulou, "Η Αττική κατά τη Βυζαντινή περίοδο (324–1204)" (PhD diss., University of Athens, 2011), 232–33. Interestingly, the fort of Panakton is attested in the sixth century by Stephanus Byzantius as "φρούριον Αττικής." *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicon* (n. 81 above), 499.13.

103 Dunn, "Rise and Fall of Towns" (n. 27 above), 50. See also Gregory, "Thisbe Basin" (n. 79 above), 22, 28–29, 33.

104 N. Papadakis, *Αρχ. Δελτ.* 8 (1923): 182; Koder and Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 275; Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 178–82; Gregory, "Thisbe Basin," 19–20; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 175–78.

105 Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 168–73, 187–94; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes*, 173–74.

106 Gregory, "Thisbe Basin," 29.

107 Idem, "Ohio Boeotia Expedition: Field Seasons 1979–1980," *Teiresias Archaeologica* (1980): 31–41; idem, "A Desert Island Survey in the Gulf of Corinth," *Archaeology* 39, no. 3 (1986): 16–21.

the planned renewal of *civitates*' enceintes by Justinian, as narrated by Procopius.

In Boeotia itself, four possible late antique forts can be identified, all located on Archaic, classical, and Hellenistic fortress and tower sites, namely Mavrovouni Kastron (Ano Siphai) north of ancient Siphai, Livadostro Kastron (ancient Kreusis and port of Thespiiai) on the bay of Livadostro, Daphni Kastron close to the ancient borders of Plataiai with the Skourta plain, and Skroponeri Kastron on the bay of Skroponeri in the northern Gulf of Euboea (fig. 4). All four sites have substantial remains of fortifications, in some cases with evidence for later restructuring and the use of mortar, thin surface concentrations of late antique pottery (mainly of the LRA2 type), and at Mavrovouni Kastron, a small Christian chapel.¹¹¹ Although it has been suggested that Chorsiai and Siphai functioned as forts in late antiquity,¹¹² the archaeological evidence at Chorsiai more likely indicates that it was a settlement with an associated fortified ancient acropolis (not unusual throughout late antiquity),¹¹³ while Siphai, situated on the coast and immediately overlooking the harbor, could indeed have functioned as another late antique fort.

The renovation of ancient fortifications and the building of new ones by Justinian in the sixth century, as narrated by Procopius, have justifiably been seen as a process of "militarization of central Greece that was modeled on that of the Balkans."¹¹⁴ There are, however, alternative ways of reading both the textual and archaeological evidence. Although the state must have felt the need to protect the population within its borders, such forts and other fortifications may have played a dual role. Their location in border zones and on often inaccessible limestone ridges, along intraregional road networks,¹¹⁵ and even in prominent locations in

ports and bays with interregional maritime traffic,¹¹⁶ suggests an administrative and economic dimension in a period of thriving economic and industrial activity in both primary local centers and satellite settlements, at least down to the mid-seventh century (on the basis of revised ceramic chronologies). Given Procopius's (and other contemporary writers') primary concern with the upper echelons of society, his work is largely political and even more warfare-oriented, rather than directly engaged with issues of urbanism and the economy; at the local level, about which textual sources rarely talk, walled cities, defended settlements, and small forts may have had a symbolic, political, or monumental functionality as well as a military and defensive purpose in the eyes of local authorities and inhabitants of both town and countryside.¹¹⁷

The evidence thus suggests a settlement hierarchy in late antique Boeotia based on an ordered habitation, economic, and defense system within defined territories or *chorai*, surviving in one way or another since Greek and Roman times. The role of primary local centers or local first-rank spaces within these territories as administrative and ecclesiastical points of reference was played by the different *civitates* and episcopal sees of Tanagra, Plataiai, Thespiiai, and Koroneia, themselves linked to and dependent on the ecclesiastical metropolis and regional *polis*-center of Thebes. The primary role that the Church, and therefore towns with episcopal sees, played within this settlement system has been noted above, in the context of political control at the local level being transferred from imperial families to Christian ones (such as local governors and bishops).

A network of satellite local second-rank settlements evolved around these primary local centers, once again at sites existing since Greek and Roman antiquity. Combined survey and rescue excavations have so far revealed a series of satellite *komai* in both inland and coastal areas, such as Eleon and Delion in the *territorium* of Tanagra; Anthedon in the territory of Thebes; Chaironeia, Levadeia, and Solinari in the district of

111 R. Tomlinson and J. M. Fossey, "Ancient Remains on Mount Mavrovouni, South Boeotia," *BSA* 65 (1970): 243–63; E.-L. Schwandel, "Die böotische Hafenstadt Siphai," *AA* (1977): 513–51; Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia*, 116–18, 158, 173, 262; Dunn, "Rise and Fall of Towns," 47.

112 Dunn, "Rise and Fall of Towns," 43, fig. 3.1, 47.

113 J. M. Fossey, ed., *Khostia*, vol. 1, *Résultats des explorations et fouilles canadiennes à Khostia en Béotie, Grèce Centrale* (Amsterdam, 1986).

114 Dunn, "Rise and Fall of Towns," 49–50.

115 For example, Daphni Kastron is located in the northeastern foothills of the Kithairon mountain range, close to the pass to Skourta and next to the road connecting Plataiai and the Skourta Plain.

116 Mavrovouni Kastron, Livadostro Kastron, and Skroponeri Kastron are outposts controlling naval routes and commercial maritime traffic associated with both of the commercially active ports of Boeotia throughout the ages.

117 S. Latimer, "Hoc est civitatis vel potius castri: City-Walls and Urban Status in Northern Italy (c. AD 493–774)," in *Debating Urbanism within and beyond the Walls A.D. 300–700*, ed. D. Sami and G. Speed (Leicester, 2010), 39–40.

Koroneia; and Thisbe, Chorsiai, Vathy, Siphai, and Askra within the control area of Thespias. Those *komai*, with or without defensive walls, either were engaged in agricultural and/or industrial/artisanal production and located in inland basins next to road networks, or were seafront settlements and ports of trade, linking their primary local centers with the outside world through wider economic and cultural exchange networks. Hamlets, villas, and farmsteads did not necessarily comprise a different settlement type. Intensive surveys have confirmed that these inferior settlement forms cannot be separated from their superior and nearest center, whether a *civitas* or a *kome*. As argued above, the populations living within the walled space of a *civitas* or a *kome* and in their immediate periphery should be regarded as a single community, mutually complementary in the development of the wider *territorium* of their respective local first-rank or local second-rank centers. This network of major and minor settled spaces within each *territorium* seems to have been watched over by a series of forts, comprising a third category within the late antique built environment. These fortified structures, located along major land routes or at loci of maritime traffic, comprised a military, political, economic, and even monumental and symbolic element in the surrounding landscape.

“Ruralization” in the Byzantine Early Middle Ages

The debate about the “ruralization” of late antique urban space during the Byzantine early Middle Ages in the late seventh and eighth centuries is ongoing and well known.¹¹⁸ However, with new archaeological

118 For representative contributions on the archaeology of towns and urbanization in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages in the central and eastern Mediterranean, see Christie and Loseby, *Towns in Transition* (n. 1 above); Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins, *Idea and Ideal of the Town* (n. 2 above); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001); Bowden, Lavan, and Machado, *Late Antique Countryside* (n. 16 above); Christie, *Landscapes of Change* (n. 2 above); Kardulias, *From Classical to Byzantine* (n. 11 above); Henning, *Post-Roman Towns* (n. 1 above); A. G. Poulter, ed., *The Transition to Late Antiquity in the Danube and Beyond* (Oxford, 2007); Goodson, Lester, and Symes, *Cities, Texts and Social Networks* (n. 1 above); Sami and Speed, *Debating Urbanism*; O. Dally and C. Ratté, eds., *Archaeology and the Cities of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2011); N. Christie and A. Augenti, eds., *Urbes Extinctae: Archaeologies of Abandoned*

discoveries and recent refinements to early medieval pottery chronology, a new picture of settlement, economy, and trade is emerging, and I am skeptical about the use of the term “ruralization” in its strict sense.¹¹⁹

War, earthquakes, and plagues are usually listed among the phenomena explaining the “shrinkage,” “decline,” “collapse,” “transition,” and “transformation” of urbanism in the Eastern Roman Empire from the late sixth to the seventh and eighth centuries. The overstressed historical validity of textual sources, however, has shaped our perception of this period in a negative manner for too long, with Slav land invasions and Arab sea raids viewed as the explanation for almost every misfortune in the early medieval Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.¹²⁰ The fate of populations on several islands and islets in central and southern Greece, such as those in the bay of Itea, the Saronic Gulf, and the Gulf of Corinth, are typical examples of archaeological and textual interpretations that have been put forward, based on different aspects of material culture and the presumed Slav invasions of 578.¹²¹ Evidence for human activity in the early Middle Ages in urban environments with a long history of habitation in Greece and Asia Minor has, however, often been

Classical Towns (Farnham, 2012); Kioussopoulou, *Οι βυζαντινές πόλεις* (n. 48 above).

119 As Sanders has pointed out in the case of Corinth, “until we know when, discussions of where, why, and how are inaccurate, largely irrelevant, and abstract scholarly exercises.” G. D. R. Sanders, “Recent Developments in the Chronology of Byzantine Corinth,” in *Corinth, the Centenary, 1896–1996*, ed. C. K. Williams II and N. Bookidis (Princeton, 2003), 385.

120 P. Charanis, “The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of the Slavonic Settlements in Greece,” *DOP* 5 (1950): 141–66; G. Ostrogorsky, “Byzantium and the South Slavs,” *SEER* 42 (1963): 1–14; D. Zakythinos, “La grande brèche dans la tradition historique de l’Hellénisme du septième au neuvième siècle,” in *Χαριστή εις Αναστάσιον Κ. Ὀρλάνδον* (Athens, 1965–68), 3:300–327; J. Herrin, “Aspects of the Process of Hellenization in the Early Middle Ages,” *BSA* 68 (1973): 113–26; C. A. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), 62–69; C. Foss, “Syria in Transition, AD 550–750: An Archaeological Approach,” *DOP* 51 (1997): 189–269; K. G. Holum, “The Classical City in the Sixth Century: Survival and Transformation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Mass (Cambridge, 2005), 87–112.

121 Hood, “Aspect of the Slav Invasions,” 165–71; idem, “Isles of Refuge,” 37–45; Gregory, “Diporito,” 287–304; idem, “A Desert Island Survey,” 16–21; Kardulias, Gregory, and Sawmiller, “Late Antique Exploitation,” 3–21; J. Rosser, “Byzantine ‘Isles of Refuge’ in the *Chronicle of Galaxeidi*,” in *The Archaeology of Medieval Greece*, ed. P. Lock and G. D. R. Sanders (Oxford, 1995), 139–45.

hastily removed in the quest for monumental remains of the classical past, leading to the assumption that towns shrank and became fortified villages, while the economy contracted and urban life collapsed.¹²² Over the last forty years the period between the seventh and ninth centuries has been widely seen as one of dramatic urban decline, with populations retreating into the fortified citadels of once large cities, such as Sardis, Ephesos, and Pergamon.¹²³

These claims of a dramatic decline in population and, in some extreme cases, the replacement of Greek populations by invading Slavs from the north in the period generally known as the “Dark Ages” and, a little later, by raiding Arabs from the sea remain big issues.¹²⁴ The problem of identifying human activity in the troubled period between the mid-seventh and early ninth centuries is compounded by difficulties in dating the material culture of the period. Apart from sometimes false assumptions made on the basis of the few surviving texts, there have been misleading attempts to assign ethnic labels to those using certain types of material culture.

The fortress of Hexamilion at Isthmia is a well-known case from mainland Greece, about which historical data and archaeological evidence (amphorae of the late Roman tradition, other wheel-thrown pottery such as table jugs and jars, and handmade vessels, such as the so-called Slav Ware, found in the same

contexts) suggest the peaceful coexistence of Slavs and Byzantines.¹²⁵ Excavations at Corinth have similarly provided evidence that the city was not abandoned with the arrival of the Slavs in the Peloponnese. As argued by Guy Sanders, “imported and local pottery, coins and minor objects attest widespread late Roman occupation well into the second half of the seventh century,” while a small but growing corpus of material of eighth-century date suggests continuity into the Dark Ages.¹²⁶

Surface surveys in the Boeotian cities of Thespiiai, Askra, and Hyettos, and in the extramural territory of Tanagra (discussed below), have also produced evidence for the presence of Slav handmade pottery together with wheel-thrown ceramics made with coarse local clays.¹²⁷ A similar pattern has been identified at Sagalassos in Asia Minor, as well as at several sites in Cyprus (Kalavassos-Kopetra, Kourion, and Nea Paphos), where handmade, often poorly fired cookware suggests habitation into the eighth and ninth centuries and a shift from Roman mass-produced and customized wares to nonspecialized local/regional production.¹²⁸ It is also now clear that populations

122 C. Foss, “Archaeology and the ‘Twenty Cities’ of Byzantine Asia,” *AJA* 81 (1977): 469–86; idem, *Cities, Fortresses, and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot, 1996).

123 C. Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 53–66; idem, “‘Twenty Cities’ of Byzantine Asia,” 472–81; idem, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979); W. Radt, “Pergamon, 1984,” *AnatSt* 35 (1985): 206–9.

124 There is much literature on the impact of Slav invasions in mainland Greece and Arab raids along coasts and islands. For a representative corpus of published studies, see J. Koder, “Historical Aspects of a Recession of Cultivated Land at the End of the Late Antiquity in the East Mediterranean,” in *Evaluation of Land Surfaces Cleared from Forests in the Mediterranean Region during the Time of the Roman Empire*, ed. B. Frenzel (Stuttgart, 1994), 157–67; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996); idem, “Decline and Fall? Studying Long-Term Change in the East,” in Lavan and Bowden, *Theory and Practice* (n. 35 above), 404–23; J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1997); L. Brubaker and J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge, 2011).

125 T. E. Gregory and P. N. Kardulias, “Geophysical and Surface Surveys in the Byzantine Fortress at Isthmia,” *Hesperia* 59 (1990): 467–511; T. E. Gregory, “An Early Byzantine (Dark Age) Settlement at Isthmia: A Preliminary Report,” in *The Corinthia in the Roman Period*, ed. T. E. Gregory (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), 149–60; E. Anagnostakis and N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, “Η πρωτοβυζαντινή Μεσσήνη (5^{ος}–7^{ος} αιώνας) και προβλήματα της χειροποίητης κεραμικής στην Πελοπόννησο,” *Σύμμεικτα* 11 (1997): 229–322; N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, “Βυζαντινή κεραμική από τον ελληνικό νησιωτικό χώρο και από την Πελοπόννησο (7^{ος}–9^{ος} αι.): Μια πρώτη προσέγγιση,” in *Οι Σκοτεινοί Αιώνες του Βυζαντίου (7^{ος}–9^{ος} αι.)*, ed. E. Kountoura-Galake (Athens, 2001), 231–66.

126 G. D. R. Sanders, “New Relative and Absolute Chronologies for 9th to 13th Century Glazed Wares at Corinth: Methodology and Social Conclusions,” in Belke et al., *Byzanz als Raum* (n. 11 above), 154.

127 Vionis, “Current Archaeological Research” (n. 20 above), 33–34; idem, “Considering a Rural and Household Archaeology of the Byzantine Aegean: The Ceramic Spectrum,” in *Pottery and Social Dynamics in the Mediterranean and Beyond in Medieval and Post-Medieval Times*, ed. J. L. Bintliff and M. Caroscio (Oxford, 2013), 29–31.

128 A. H. S. Megaw, “Betwixt Greeks and Saracens,” in *Acts of the International Symposium “Cyprus Between the Orient and the Occident”* (Nicosia, 1986), 511–12; M. Rautman, “Handmade Pottery and Social Change: The View from Late Roman Cyprus,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 11, no. 1 (1998): 85–89, 92–93; idem, *A Cypriot Village of Late Antiquity: Kalavassos-Kopetra in the Vasilikos Valley* (Portsmouth, RI, 2003), 175–76; R. S. Gabrieli, B. McCall,

of the late seventh and eighth centuries continued using sixth- and seventh-century material (some tableware categories, such as Cypriot Red Slip Ware and Sagalassos Red Slip Ware), along with handmade and other types of utilitarian ceramics produced in the household.¹²⁹ In the past thirty years, a number of Greek archaeologists have also challenged the perceived break in continuity in the seventh century in mainland Greece and the Aegean islands.¹³⁰ Thus, the absence or invisibility of the material culture from the late seventh to the ninth century remains a major issue, although it is generally accepted that the problem is due to the fact that archaeologists are unable, as yet, to identify pottery of this period.

Byzantinists seem to have consistently tended to compare Byzantine towns and their successors to their Roman predecessors.¹³¹ The volume of archaeological data has increased considerably over the past decade, but the evidence at first sight does not seem to support the argument that towns, despite their transformations and adaptations to new political, economic, and social conditions, really continued to play the same central role as in Greco-Roman and late antiquity. A reevaluation, however, of the evidence at hand from late antique towns is urgently needed before we can reach any concrete conclusions about early medieval settlement hierarchy in the Byzantine provinces, as the

archaeological data can be read from either a positive or negative perspective.¹³²

John Haldon has summarized the different late antique and early medieval settlement types as they emerge from archaeological and historical research: (a) the “ruralized city” with empty lands within its walls available for agriculture and pasture; (b) the “city in islands” with settled space broken up into independent units; (c) the “transferred city,” the population of which moved to a nearby location; (d) the “fortress city,” the population of which moved to a fortified site; and (e) the “continuous city,” which showed a considerable degree of continuity in infrastructure and the use of space.¹³³ This, however, should not be taken as a strict categorization of urban transformation in the Byzantine early Middle Ages in Greece, Asia Minor, or Cyprus, mainly because a new category of settled space emerging during this period combined several of these settlement types. A characteristic example is Amorion, which seems to have maintained its urban character as a regional capital and military center until the ninth century, and where the fortified citadel remained an occupational zone, while different districts within the late antique walls continued to be inhabited.¹³⁴

As illustrated below in the case of Boeotia, urbanism in the Byzantine early Middle Ages did not collapse entirely, and the “idea of the city” or the role of the old local/regional centers may have survived in an altered form after the conventional end of late antiquity in the seventh century. Although I recognize that major changes occurred during the period in question, I prefer to detach my approach to the issue of “continuity” or “discontinuity” of *civitates* and urban life in the Byzantine early Middle Ages from the established

and J. R. Green, “Medieval Kitchen Ware from the Theatre Site at Nea Paphos,” *RDAC* (2001): 336; A. K. Vionis, J. Poblome, and M. Waelkens, “The Hidden Material Culture of the Dark Ages: Early Medieval Ceramics at Sagalassos (Turkey): New Evidence (ca AD 650–800),” *AnatSt* 59 (2009): 152–53, 161.

129 P. Armstrong, “Trade in the East Mediterranean in the Eighth Century,” in *Byzantine Trade, 4th–12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange; Papers of the 38th Annual Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. M. Mundell Mango (Farnham, 2009), 159–63; Vionis, Poblome, and Waelkens, “Hidden Material Culture,” 158–60.

130 K. Tsakos, “Συμβολή στην παλαιοχριστιανική και πρώιμη βυζαντινή μνημειογραφία της Σάμου,” *Πρακτ. Αρχ. Ετ.* (1979): 11–25; M. S. Kordosis, “Ένα λακωνικό βυζαντινό κάστρο του όγδοου αιώνα,” *Λακ. Σπ.* 6 (1982): 259–67; R. Etzeoglou, “Καρυοῦπολις, μία ερειπωμένη βυζαντινή πόλη,” *Λακ. Σπ.* 9 (1988): 3–60.

131 W. Treadgold, “The Break in Byzantium and the Gap in Byzantine Studies,” *ByzF* 15 (1990): 294–303; A. R. Commito, “Southern Asia Minor and Northwest Syria at the End of Antiquity: A View from the Countryside” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2014), 80–81.

132 For similar approaches to issues of urban life in the Early Middle Ages, see G. Speed, “Mind the (Archaeological) Gap: Tracing Life in Early Post-Roman Towns,” in Sami and Speed, *Debating Urbanism*, 83–109.

133 J. Haldon, “Social Transformation in the 6th–9th C. East,” in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, ed. W. Bowden, A. Cutleridge, and C. Machado (Leiden, 2006), 614.

134 C. Lightfoot, “Amorium Excavations 1994: The Seventh Preliminary Report,” *AnatSt* 45 (1995): 105–38; idem, “The Public and Domestic Architecture of a Thematic Capital: The Archaeological Evidence from Amorion,” in Lampakis, *Byzantine Asia Minor* (n. 7 above), 303–20; idem, “Business as Usual? Archaeological Evidence for Byzantine Commercial Enterprise at Amorion in the Seventh to Eleventh Centuries,” in *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. Morrisson (Washington, DC, 2012), 177–91.

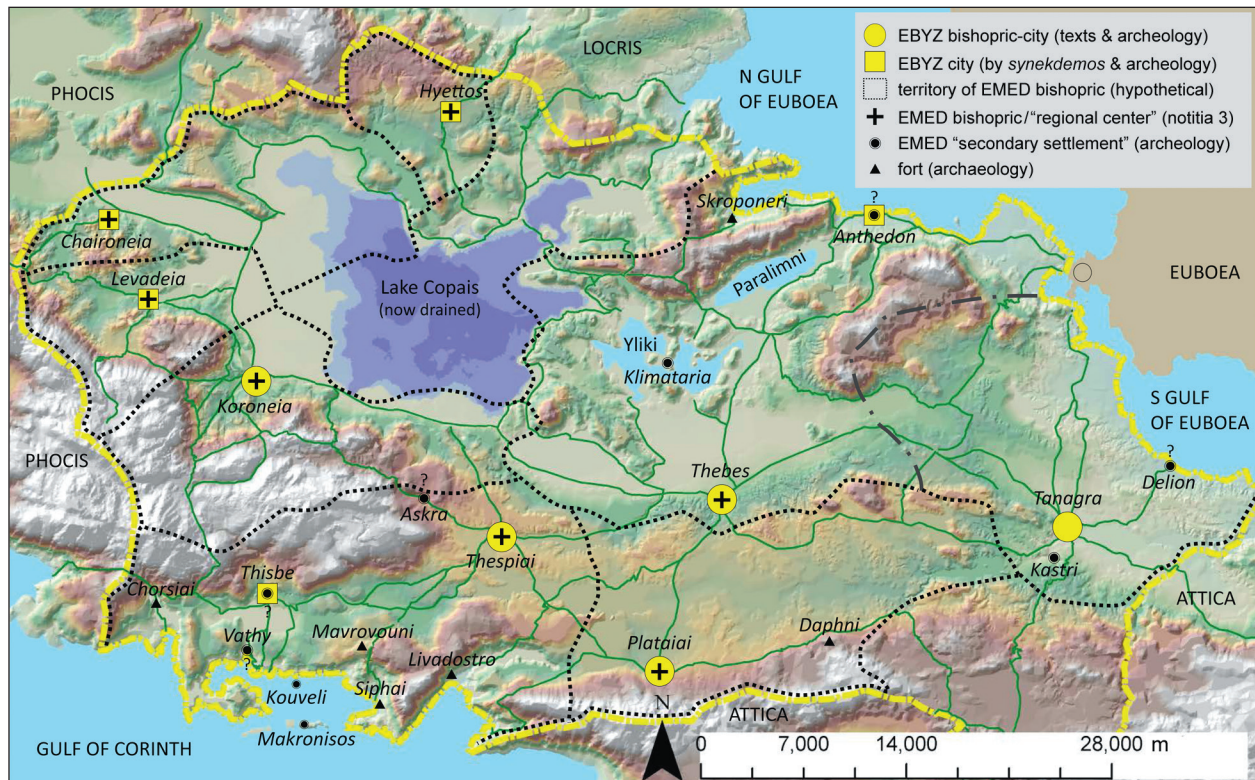


Fig. 5. Boeotia in the Byzantine early Middle Ages (DEM by Emeri Farinetti, data by the author)

theories in current scholarship.¹³⁵ Thus, in the case of Boeotia, I have mapped bishoprics listed by the written sources in an attempt to combine and compare this information with the archaeological record, which is itself reevaluated in the light of our current knowledge of previously unrecognized pottery types and numismatic finds (fig. 5). It should also be emphasized that the references in the sources to bishoprics at sev-

eral locations and previous *civitates* throughout the empire do not necessarily imply the survival and presence of a city or the urban character of a site during the Byzantine early Middle Ages and later.¹³⁶

On the basis of his previous work at the ancient city sites of Hyettos and Thespiiai in Boeotia, Bintliff argued that the lack of evidence for rewalling at Hyettos in late antiquity suggests a process of ruralization, with the village community dispersing to a cluster of small sites in the open country close to the ancient town during the Byzantine early Middle Ages, while limited archaeological evidence for activity suggests a reduction in the extent of Thespiiai.¹³⁷ A restudy of the surface ceramic material from Hyettos, however, has revealed dispersed settlement activity within the former town area throughout

135 For the major previous and current approaches and theories about the decline, ruralization, or transformation of Byzantine cities into the early Middle Ages, see G. Ostrogorski, "Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages," *DOP* 13 (1959): 47–66; A. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 429–78; F. Trombley, "The Decline of the Seventh-Century Town: The Exception of Euchaita," in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos*, ed. S. Vryonis Jr. (Malibu, 1985), 65–90; J. Russell, "Transformations in Early Byzantine Urban Life: The Contributions and Limitations of Archaeological Evidence," in *17th International Byzantine Congress*, 137–54; W. Brandes, "Byzantine Cities in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries—Different Sources, Different Histories?," in Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins, *Idea and Ideal of the Town*, 25–57; J. Haldon, "Social Transformation," 603–47.

136 M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 73–82; A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire, 900–1200* (Cambridge, 1989), 200; Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators" (n. 28 above), 756; Brandes, "Byzantine Cities," 41–44.

137 Bintliff, "Reconstructing the Byzantine Countryside," 41–44. John L. Bintliff, pers. comm.

THESPIAI**Early medieval sherds**

- = 1 sherd (certain date)
- ▲ = 1 sherd (probable date)

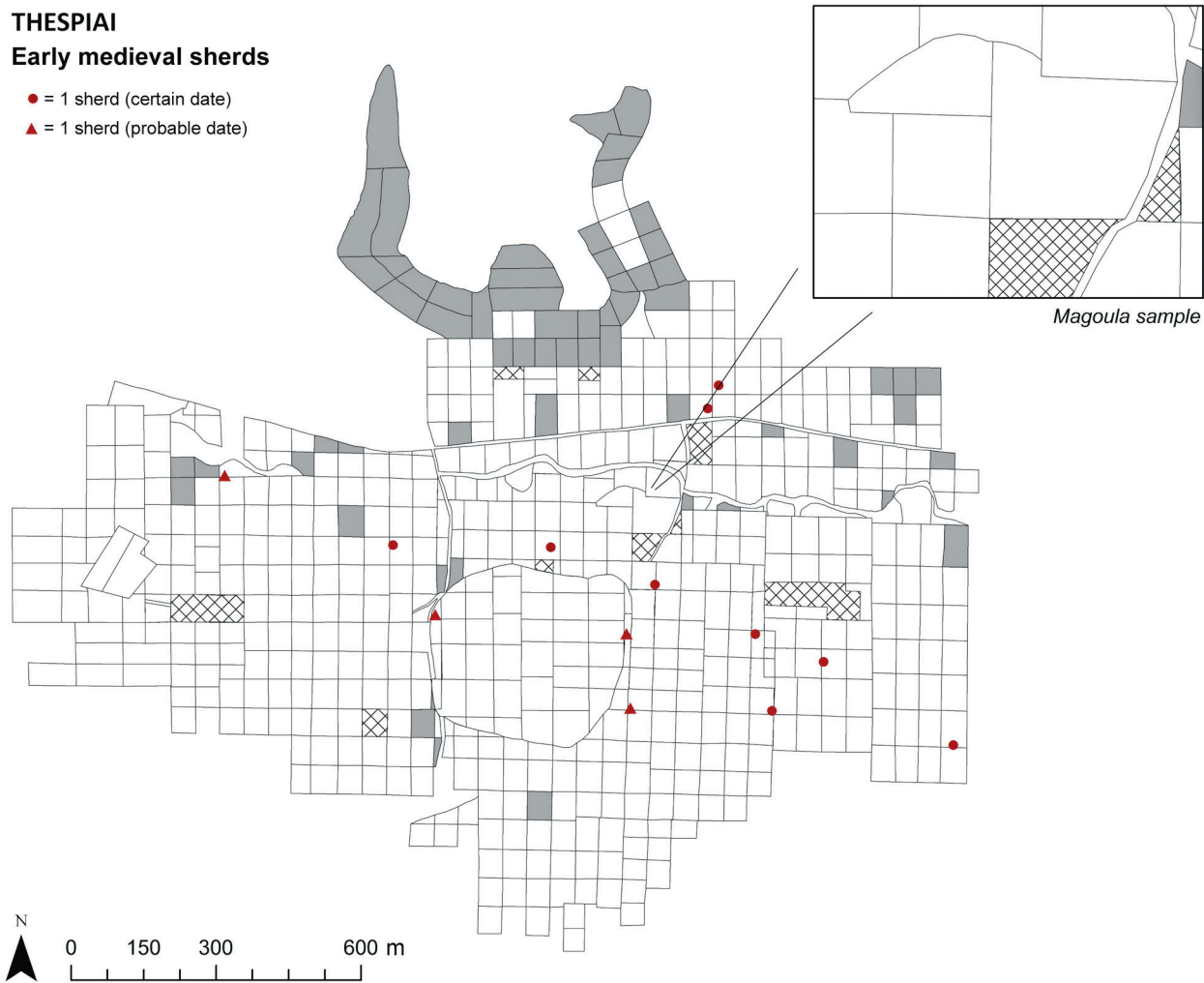


Fig. 6. The distribution of early medieval ceramics across the site of Thespiai (map courtesy of the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project)

the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. Not only did settlement continue, but transport amphorae of known types, such as early Byzantine Globular Amphorae found in Constantinople and Aegean regions that remained under Byzantine control during this period, indicate continuity in production and trade.¹³⁸ This suggests that we should question the degree of ruralization assumed to have taken place in towns after the seventh century in different parts of the empire.

138 This is an amphora type also known as *Sarāthane 35*, dated to the eighth century and later. See J. W. Hayes, *Excavations at Sarāthane in Istanbul*, vol. 2, *The Pottery* (Princeton, 1992), 32–42; Vionis, “Rural and Household Archaeology,” 30–31.

Recent redating of the surface ceramics collected in the Valley of the Muses by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project suggests a similar picture of continuity at the large *kome* of Askra, which flourished between the fourth and seventh centuries (see above), with evidence that the site was occupied throughout late antiquity (in the form of LRA1 and LRA2 survivals and other domestic wares, such as plain jugs of the early Middle Ages). Further continuity into the middle Byzantine period at Askra is attested by securely dated Byzantine ceramics of types current from the late ninth to the twelfth century, suggesting a spatially smaller site associated with a central church. This community and its church can be identified through textual sources

with a settlement then known as Zaratova, which gained an Orthodox bishop in the twelfth century.¹³⁹ If so, we are facing, once again, an interesting case of “a genuinely transitional settlement pattern” and the beginnings of a new settlement system in the Byzantine early Middle Ages, at least in this region.¹⁴⁰ The same pattern of continuity has been revealed recently at the ancient and late antique city of Koroneia, where the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project has collected a significant quantity of surface pottery dating to the period in question from within the walls of the ancient acropolis.

Even more interestingly, at the ancient city site and late antique bishopric of Thespiiai, a recent restudy of the surface pottery from within the antique urban area has revealed low-density human activity in different parts of the site, both in the late antique core zones of settlement and burial and in places that would later form the center of the middle Byzantine settlement that developed within the city’s ancient borders (fig. 6).¹⁴¹ Although only thirteen fragments of early medieval pottery have been identified,¹⁴² this material clearly indicates some settlement activity in the late antique town. In addition, a carved piece of church architecture from the late antique enclosure of Thespiiai, dated between the eighth and early ninth centuries, provides further evidence for the continuation of domestic life within (as well as outside) the enclosure walls.¹⁴³ Another interesting case is the late antique settlement of Klimataria on Lake Yliki (within the *chora* of ancient Thebes), surveyed by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project and recognized as

the location of ancient Hyle by Fossey.¹⁴⁴ A reexamination of the surface ceramics brought to light secure evidence for settlement and burial in late antiquity, as well for limited human activity at the site in the Byzantine early Middle Ages.¹⁴⁵

Returning to the region of Tanagra, we are continually surprised by new discoveries that throw light on early medieval settlement hierarchy and continuity in this region. Although originally thought to have replaced the shrunken walled town of Tanagra in the early Middle Ages, a walled refuge site two kilometers away, on the hill of Agios Konstantinos or Kastri, suggests a different situation based on careful examination of the built structures and ceramic evidence (fig. 7). The hill, now occupied by a nunnery, is surrounded by a defensive wall running along the contours, encircling an upper and a lower terrace (fig. 8). Survey and rescue excavation have revealed a densely occupied area, with the ceramic evidence suggesting continuity from the fifth or sixth to the twelfth century, and a fifth/sixth-century date for the construction of the enceinte.¹⁴⁶ This means that this site, smaller than the walled area of late antique Tanagra, and Tanagra itself coexisted for nearly two and a half centuries. The quantity of LRA1 and LRA2 from Kastri is overwhelming, reflecting the same degree of prosperity as at Tanagra at least until the mid- or late seventh century. There would seem, consequently, to have been no urgent need for the inhabitants of Tanagra to seek refuge on the hill of Kastri. Hence, the story of people fleeing to the mountains ahead of invading Slavs in the southern Balkans, as narrated in the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, does not fit the archaeological evidence from the territory of Tanagra.

139 J. L. Bintliff, “Recent Developments and New Approaches to the Archaeology of Medieval Greece,” in *IV European Symposium for Teachers of Medieval Archaeology*, ed. M. Valor and A. Carmona (Seville, 2001), 37; A. K. Vionis, “‘Reading’ Art and Material Culture: Greeks, Slavs and Arabs in the Byzantine Aegean,” in *Negotiating Co-existence: Communities, Cultures and ‘Convivencia’ in Byzantine Society*, ed. B. Crostini and S. La Porta (Trier, 2013), 112–13.

140 John L. Bintliff, pers. comm.

141 John L. Bintliff, Anthony Snodgrass, pers. comm.

142 Seven jugs of the so-called Plain Ware type, three fragments of closed vessels of Pattern-Burnished Ware, one sherd from a Handmade Cooking Ware, and two amphora fragments of the Saraçhane 35 type. For a discussion of this group of ceramic wares, see Vionis, Poblome, and Waelkens, “Hidden Material Culture,” 150–53, 154–58.

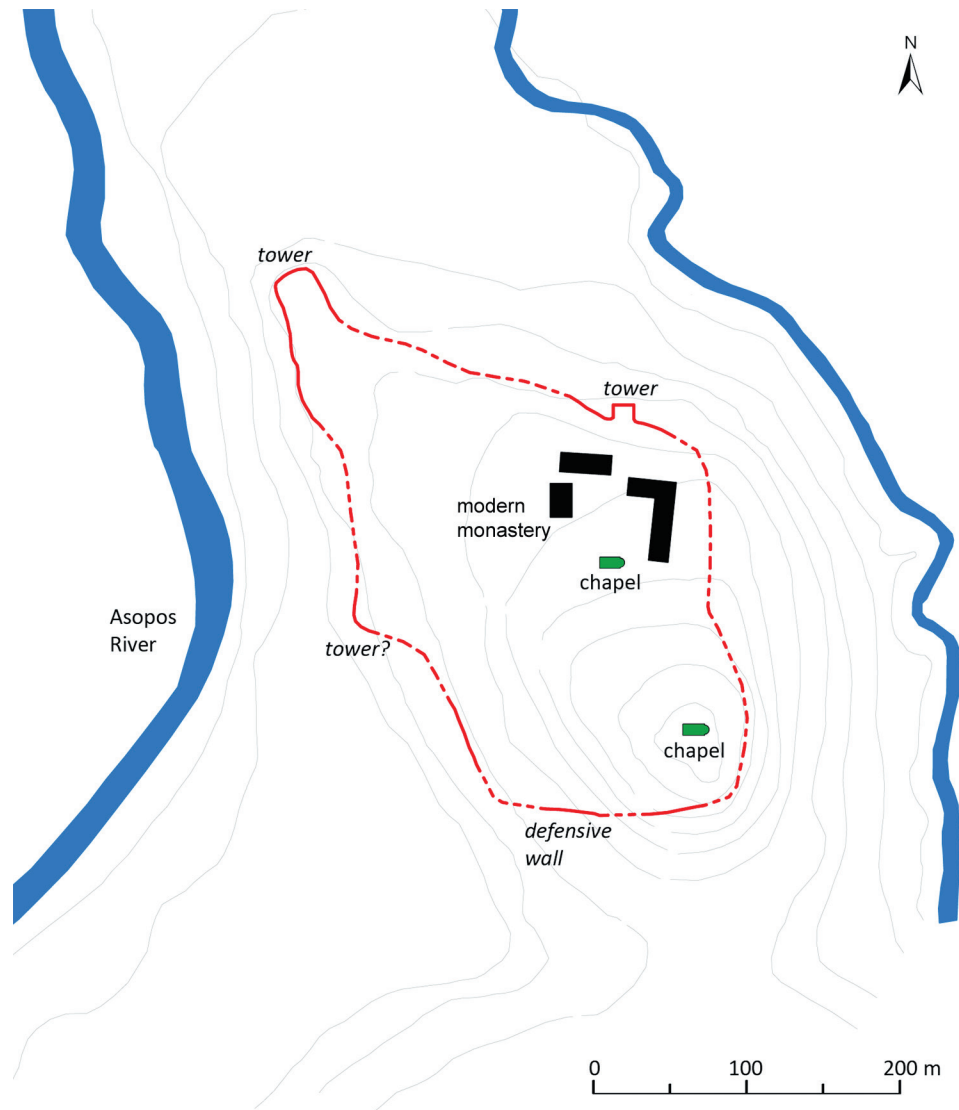
143 The dating of the sculpted piece was provided by Michalis Karambinis, one of the collaborators of the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project.

144 Fossey, *Ancient Boiotia* (n. 88 above), 240–43; Farinetti, *Boeotian Landscapes* (n. 5 above), 194.

145 Various pottery types of the early Middle Ages have been identified at the site, namely Pattern-Burnished Ware, Plain Wares, and Saraçhane 35 amphorae. See Vionis, Poblome, and Waelkens, “Hidden Material Culture,” 158.

146 The ceramic assemblage retrieved during the rescue excavation undertaken at Kastri by the Archaeological Ephorate of Boeotia is currently under study by Katerina Chamilaki (University of Athens). The pottery fragments from the foundations of the east sector of the enceinte, which provide a date from the early Iron Age to the fifth/sixth centuries AD, were retrieved during systematic archaeological survey by the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project.

Fig. 7.
Plan of the site
of Kastri in the
Tanagrike (drawing by
Chrystalla Loizou)



On the contrary, the evidence from Tanagra and Kastri seems to indicate that the first signs of change in urban space in the sixth and seventh centuries did not involve the aesthetic decline of cities; as well as investing in the size and appearance of basilica churches, the second most important element of late antique societies was investment in land and other means of production. As noted above, the same pattern is identified on fortified and unfortified islets in the Aegean and the Gulf of Corinth, where large-scale installations and transport vessels point to economic expansion rather than contraction. Archaeological evidence suggests that habitation continued within the walled site of Kastri in the eighth and ninth centuries, but in a rather more

dispersed pattern, while its late antique walls (comparable in size to other walled sites in the Aegean and Asia Minor) must have been kept in good condition by its inhabitants. Fragments of handmade pottery, along with other pottery types (including amphorae of *Saraçhane 35* and *Plain Ware* jugs), in combination with Slav toponyms surviving in the province of Boeotia, provide direct hints of settlement continuity with the probable replacement of Greco-Roman with Slav ethnic place names.¹⁴⁷ Although it would be simplistic to

147 Bintliff, "Reconstructing the Byzantine Countryside" (n. 11 above), 42; Vionis, "'Reading' Art and Material Culture," 112; idem, "Rural and Household Archaeology," 30.



Fig. 8. The hill of Kastri from the southeast (photo by the author)

argue that the walled site of Kastri succeeded Tanagra in the Byzantine early Middle Ages, the archaeological data confirms some kind of link between the former and the latter in terms of settlement and site-status in the region.

Kastro Apalirou on the island of Naxos, a walled site located on a mountaintop in the interior of the island, is a case similar to that of Kastri in Boeotia and other fortified sites with evidence for early medieval occupation on the Greek mainland, Asia Minor, and other Aegean islands.¹⁴⁸ A team from the University of

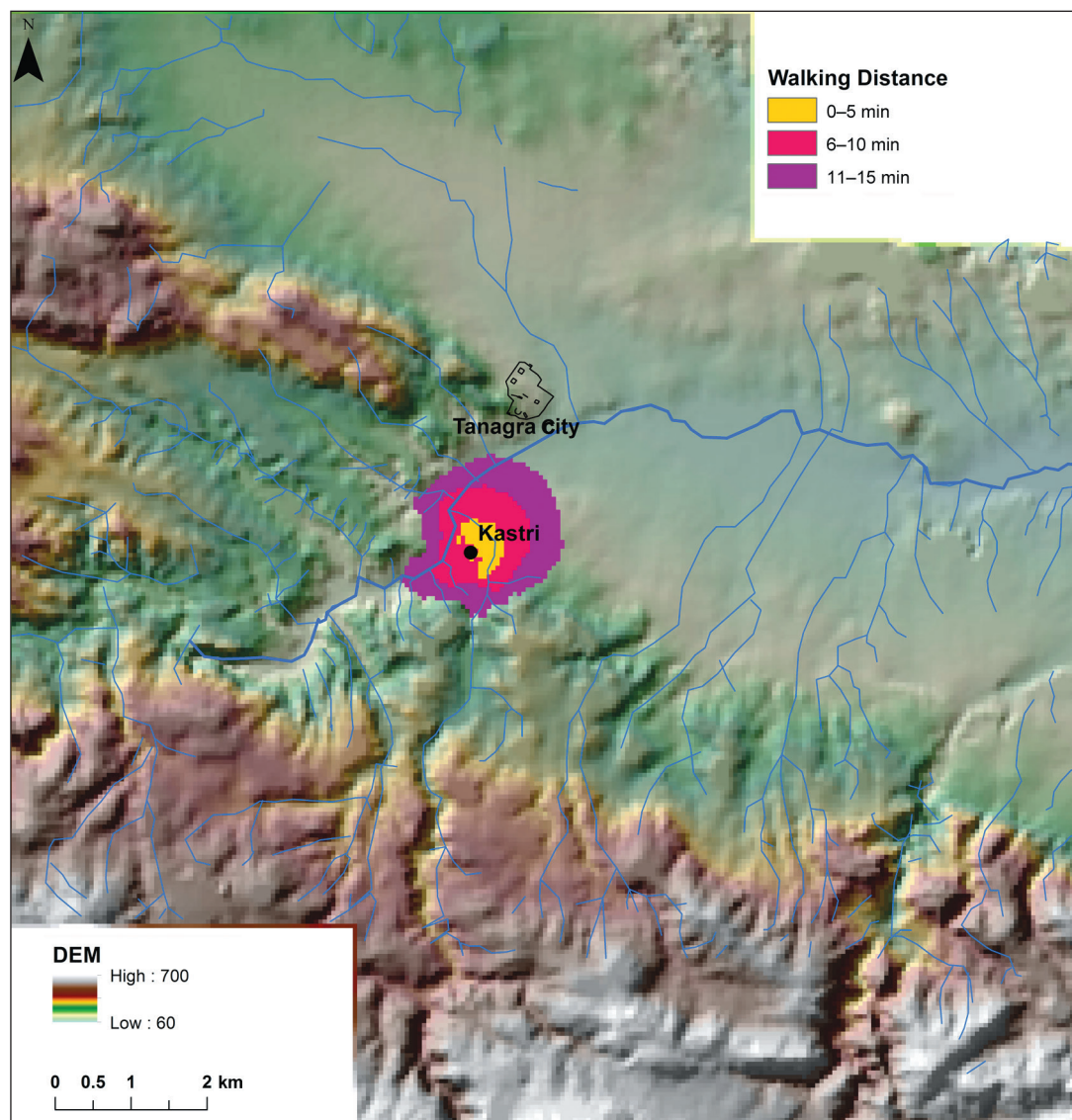
Oslo has suggested that Kastro Apalirou functioned as the main town of Naxos from the mid-/late seventh to at least the tenth century, on the basis of an archaeological and topographic survey carried out at the site.¹⁴⁹ Later sources attest that Apalirou was the main town

have generally been regarded as refuge sites for Byzantine populations in despair, their material culture points in a different direction (discussed below). For a general account of such sites in the Aegean, see Vionis, *Aegean Archaeology*, 86–88, 129–32.

¹⁴⁹ The survey within the walls of Apalirou has been coordinated by Knut Ødegård, David Hill, and Håkon Ingvaldsen from the University of Oslo since 2010 with the collaboration of the Archaeological Ephorate of the Cyclades. A second survey project in the environs of Kastro Apalirou has been conducted since 2014 by a team from the Universities of Edinburgh and Newcastle in collaboration with the University of Oslo, directed by Jim Crow and Sam Turner.

¹⁴⁸ Several locations in Greece and Asia Minor, as well as other sites on Aegean islands and islets, such as Viokastro off Paros, Epano Kasto on Andros, possibly Palaiokastro on Ios, Kastro tou Lazarou on Samos, and Emporio on Chios, preserve fortification walls (with or without the use of mortar) and early medieval ceramic evidence from transport and other earthenware vessels. Although these places

Fig. 9.
The topographical
location of Kastri
and its relation to
late antique
Tanagra (DEM
and cost-surface
analysis by
Niki Kyriacou)



of the island, and archaeology has confirmed the presence of some urban components, such as fortification walls, churches, a large number of cisterns, roads, and domestic housing of varied types and sizes.¹⁵⁰ However, the overall size of Apalirou and the quality of building materials and techniques likely identify it as a *kastro*. Similar constructions have been documented in Asia

Minor. The citadel of Hamdibey Asartepe in the eastern Troad and the fortified promontory of the temple of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius in Sagalassos, constructed in about 600, have been seen, variously, as a response to an increase in population and commercial activity (in the case of the former), and as a sign of contraction and a need for defense (in the case of the latter).¹⁵¹

150 There are different stories and traditions related to the building of the *kastro* of Naxos in historians' and travelers' accounts of the postmedieval period; the most popular is the Jesuit father Robert Sauger's history, written during the 1600s. J. K. Fotheringham, *Marco Sanudo, Conqueror of the Archipelago* (Oxford, 1915).

151 M. Waelkens et al., "The Late Antique to Early Byzantine City in Southwest Anatolia: Sagalassos and Its Territory; A Case Study," in *Die Stadt in der Spätantike—Niedergang oder Wandel?*, ed. J.-U. Krause and C. Witschel (Stuttgart, 2006), 218; A. K. Vionis, J. Poblome, and M. Waelkens, "Ceramic Continuity and Daily Life in Medieval Sagalassos, SW Anatolia (ca. 650–1250 AD),"

The existence of walled sites in the Byzantine early Middle Ages on the Greek mainland, Asia Minor, and the Aegean islands, either in the form of shrunken late antique town sites or a new type of defended settlement in their immediate vicinity, is gradually becoming known to Byzantinists. Instead of a terminology that incorporates notions of decline and ruralization, such as “walled village,” “refuge site,” and “*kastro*,” I propose the terms “microtown” or “peer village” for the new form of habitation appearing in the late seventh century. Taking early medieval *Tanagrike* as an example, with Tanagra and Kastri located only a couple of kilometers apart and within the same community area (fig. 9), we might wonder what role *memory* played among the inhabitants of Kastri and how they perceived the space they inhabited: urban or rural, central or peripheral, primary or secondary?

Given that investigations so far have confirmed a further shrinking of settlement communities during the Byzantine early Middle Ages, we might also ask what archaeology has to tell us about settlement hierarchy and the types of transformations at work. First of all, we should bear in mind that settlement size and the quality of building materials and techniques are a valid proxy for the fate of towns and the ruralization of early medieval society in Byzantium. Thus, I would argue that major transformations did happen, but that the nature of these changes, accommodations, and transformations in the early Middle Ages should be viewed in a different, rather more positive light. Archaeological survey in the territory of Sagalassos has revealed an interesting settlement pattern based on large and almost self-sufficient nucleated (and often fortified) “villages” located on previously urban sites that had lost their tax-collecting function. More complex, but not necessarily larger, towns and other settlements continued to exist in Asia Minor as administrative, commercial, or military centers, such as Amorion, Ancyra, Hierapolis, and Pessinous.¹⁵² If such a settlement system existed, it would be logical to assume that *chorai* or wider territories would have been comprised

of a primary local center and many smaller, dependent secondary settlements of tenant peasants, artisans, and traders, oriented toward agricultural production and small-scale industrial activity. It is high time that we started identifying, as part of a revised settlement hierarchy, more complex settlements with specific functions, even possibly labeling them “microtowns” or “transformed towns.”

One of the principal characteristics of urban environments or primary local centers is artisanal or industrial production and commercialization. Evidence for activity of this kind in late antique towns in Boeotia has been briefly surveyed above. The distribution of ceramic wasters and iron slag in several loci of Thespiiai (with a greater dominance of finds within the enceinte of the late antique town) fits the pattern of most late antique towns and other defended enclosures of urban or nonurban function (such as the fortress of Isthmia).¹⁵³ The case of Messene in the Peloponnese is of extreme importance here, as excavations testify to a transformed urban environment already in the late sixth and seventh centuries, with the urban fabric overtaken by significant production activities, including the construction of a water mill, the extraction and reworking of ancient building materials, and the construction of lime kilns, while a seventh- or eighth-century inscription from the center of the ancient city confirms the existence of agricultural establishments and cultivated fields within the town. As Nikos Tsivikis concludes, early medieval populations were no longer interested in symbolic capital or in investing in the construction of monuments of prestige, but rather, and most importantly, in production and economic infrastructure and activity.¹⁵⁴

It seems very likely that the encroachment on public spaces and the thin carpet of early medieval transport amphorae at late antique sites such as Hyettos, Thespiiai, and even Kastri, indicate a network of dispersed or nucleated settlements through the late seventh, eighth, and early/mid-ninth centuries, concentrating on self-sufficiency, agricultural production, and, to some extent, the export of foodstuffs through regional or interregional trade. Although previous studies have seen the emergence of *kastra* and the encroachment of late antique cities in the late sixth

in *Archaeology of the Countryside in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. T. Vorderstrasse and J. J. Roodenberg (Leiden, 2009), 200–202; C. B. Rose, “Troy and the Granicus River Valley in Late Antiquity,” in Dally and Ratté, *Cities of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity* (n. 118 above), 167–69.

152 Vionis, Poblome, and Waelkens, “Ceramic Continuity,” 201.

153 Gregory, *Isthmia* (n. 48 above); Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall* (n. 118 above); Kardulias, *From Classical to Byzantine* (n. 11 above).

154 Tsivikis, “Πού πάνε οι πόλεις,” 59–62, 69.

and seventh centuries as a sign of urban decay and militarization, recent scholarship views the encroachment of public spaces due to commercialization as an indication of intense economic activity rather than the collapse of urban space.¹⁵⁵ Thus, early medieval settlement sites which contracted within or at the periphery of late antique towns in Boeotia seem to satisfy one of the basic elements of urbanization: production and economic activity. How could the fragments of Saraçhane 35 amphorae be interpreted otherwise?

Participation in trade networks is another important characteristic of primary local centers. The ceramic wares referred to above (in the case of Hyettos, Thespiiai, Askra, and Kastri) provide a new and important insight into the composition of assemblages at a number of sites, not only in central Greece, but also in Crete, southwestern Anatolia, and Cyprus. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that coarse wares comprise the bulk of domestic pottery during this period. There is also, despite the coarse nature of this pottery, a common pattern of ceramic manufacture and form in those lands that remained under Byzantine control in the eighth century. The distribution of eighth-century coins forms an excellent parallel to that of eighth-century amphorae and common wares, and further testifies to continuity of trade throughout this period.

Although it may be pure coincidence that most of the sites with eighth-century numismatic and ceramic evidence are located in regions well known for past and ongoing archaeological research, the fact that these sites are located on long-established trade routes between the east and west should not be underestimated.¹⁵⁶ The distribution of this ceramic *koine* reveals a pattern of connectivity between certain regions of the empire, where local particularities (historical or other) seem to have played their role. But is this distribution of similar wares and forms evidence for trade and the movement of goods? The answer may be yes, especially in cases where diagnostic types of amphorae or other pottery vessels, such as Pattern-Burnished Ware, have been identified, implying the participation of sites within a

regional exchange network. As previously unknown wares of the Byzantine early Middle Ages are gradually identified among the bulk of undated common wares, the emerging picture is of trade continuing on a reduced scale after the seventh century, while immigrant or itinerant populations, such as merchants and traders or military contingents, brought with them both techniques and modes of consumption.¹⁵⁷

In addition, as illustrated above, the gradual shift from mass-produced to nonspecialized local or regional production should be seen as a response to a changing economic system based mainly on household-level production, rather than as a general decline in trade and urban life.¹⁵⁸ Coastal places or late antique *emporion* in Boeotia, such as Delion, Anthedon, and Vathy, appear to have retained some role as centers where products were gathered and redistributed in the early Middle Ages.

Fortification walls and walled spaces should be viewed as another characteristic landmark of the period, possibly signifying a sense of connectivity (rather than a conscious divide) between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The functionality of fortification walls during this period may be viewed as primarily political, at least on a local or regional scale. Considering that such constructions, irrespective of their quality, were designed to create a visible separation between the peaceful community inside and the unstable world outside, their height and overall appearance must have inspired a sense of monumentality and authority in an otherwise fragmented peripheral region of the Byzantine world. An interesting comparison can be made between the fortified settlements of Boeotia in the early Middle Ages (Kastri, Plataiai, Thespiiai, Koroneia, and Hyettos) and Lombard Italy, where the relationship between city walls and urban status has been questioned on the basis of Paul the Deacon's

155 Saradi, *Byzantine City* (n. 35 above), 441–71. For an up-to-date view and new approaches to urban space, see L. Lavan, "From *Polis* to *Emporion*? Retail and Regulation in the Late Antique City," in Morrisson, *Trade and Markets*, 333–77.

156 F. Curta, "Byzantium in Dark Age Greece (the Numismatic Evidence in Its Balkan Context)," *BMGS* 29, no. 2 (2005): 113–46; Vionis, "'Reading' Art and Material Culture," 115, 126, fig. 8.

157 Armstrong, "Trade in the East Mediterranean," 165–67, 178; D. Pieri, "Regional and Interregional Exchanges in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Early Byzantine Period: The Evidence of Amphorae," in Morrisson, *Trade and Markets*, 47–49; J. F. Haldon, "Commerce and Exchange in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries: Regional Trade and the Movement of Goods," in Morrisson, *Trade and Markets*, 103–8.

158 Vionis, Poblome, and Waelkens, "Hidden Material Culture," 161.

Historia Langobardorum.¹⁵⁹ As Simona Latimer notes, Paul makes careful use of the words “city” (*civitas*) and “fortress” (*castrum*), in that he employs the term *castrum* for the site of Forum Iulii (a fortified settlement) before its elevation to the role of capital of the region by King Alboin (568–572), after which he “shows no further hesitation in applying the term *civitas*” to the king’s preferred settlement.¹⁶⁰

If a political decision can change the status of a settlement so dramatically from one day to another, irrespective of its location, public amenities, and history, one wonders whether the growth and decline in the number of bishoprics mentioned in the sources may reflect the growing or declining importance of local or regional settlements on the basis of the Church’s political decisions. The total of thirty-nine bishoprics attested in the third *notitia* for the province of Hellas is certainly spectacular, especially when considering that as many as seven sites in the province of Boeotia—namely Thebes, Hyettos, Chaironeia, Koroneia, Levadeia, Plataiai, and Thespiiai—are attested as suffragan bishoprics of Athens in the eighth century.¹⁶¹ The map of early medieval bishoprics in the region of Boeotia, and its division into territories with the newly founded or already existing bishoprics as their notional centers, reveals a pattern of land division similar to that noted for Greco-Roman and late antiquity (fig. 5). Although, as noted earlier, references in the sources to bishoprics at several locations do not necessarily imply the survival and presence of a city or the urban character of a site during the Byzantine early Middle Ages and later, their appearance or reappearance in the eighth century suggests not only a general political and military reorganization with the foundation of fortresses by Constantine V (as in the case of Thrace), but also the empire’s determination to impose control along important routes and crossroads in a period of administrative reorganization.¹⁶²

Whether we are dealing with a de-urbanized society in the Byzantine early Middle Ages or not, the

admittedly limited archaeological record points to contracted nucleated and dispersed settlements focused on production (agrarian in most cases) in the provinces. Written sources, such as the *Farmer’s Law*, provide important glimpses into a highly stratified society with a growing class of free peasantry building on an agricultural and pastoral economy, and suggest that the state and the Church were eager to reimpose their authority in a period of administrative reforms (through the so-called themes and the continuous assessment of existing and new bishoprics).¹⁶³ Thus, we could argue that fortified sites in the region of Boeotia (Kastri in the *Tanagrike*, Thespiiai, and Koroneia) are likely to have functioned as local primary centers, some endowed with a bishop, according to the third *notitia*; other sites, most probably unfortified (Askra and Klimataria), would have functioned as secondary settlements and satellite sites, in a fashion similar to the settlement hierarchy of late antiquity. Investigating settlement hierarchy and economic infrastructure and dependencies, however, requires not only systematic fieldwork but also great caution in how we recognize and assess a local or regional center. Defenses, proximity to the ruins of the Roman past and a memory of their previous status, the presence of a bishop (even if resident in another regional center), an elaborate church, and industrial installations or evidence for commercial activity through regional trade networks are as far as we can get with the textual and material records available for Boeotia. Finally, despite the fact that settlements in this period were largely deprived of the amenities that Roman and late antique cities enjoyed, whether or not they retained their urban status or can be characterized as “proto-urban” is not so important; what is essential to recognize is that settlements such as Thespiiai, Koroneia, and Kastri, located on or in proximity to once important local centers of urban status, should be seen as settlements “with some special functions within an entirely non-urban settlement system in which central-place functions might be dispersed between a variety of sites and places, and where central person might be as important as central place.”¹⁶⁴

159 Pauli *Historia langobardorum*, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz (Hannover, 1878), 90–91, 2.9.

160 Latimer, “City-Walls and Urban Status” (n. 117 above), 43–44.

161 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* (n. 29 above), 24–44, *notitia* 3, 687–726.

162 Hendy, *Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 80–82; E. Kountoura, “New Fortresses and Bishoprics in 8th Century Thrace,” *REB* 55 (1997): 279–80, 285–86.

163 Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (n. 124 above), 132–36; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (n. 35 above), 633; Koder, “Land Use and Settlement” (n. 7 above), 163–65.

164 C. Scull, “Ipswich: Development and Contexts of an Urban Precursor in the Seventh Century,” in *Central Places in the Migration*

Village Community Territories in Middle and Late Byzantium

Archaeological and limited textual evidence confirms a significant growth in Boeotia and other regions of Greece during the middle Byzantine period, mainly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Is this revival real, however, or merely a new archaeological visibility, as Guy Sanders would put it?¹⁶⁵ I believe it is both. It is true that in the *Tanagrike* evidence for intense settlement activity is revealed through large ceramic concentrations around churches outside the walled sites of Tanagra and Kastri. The surface finds from such sites reflect a dense network of settlement sites at almost one kilometer intervals across what is today open, fertile countryside.¹⁶⁶ Farming remained the prime occupation during the Byzantine era. Farming settlements and villages were scattered across the middle Byzantine countryside, and it seems that the provinces were oriented toward and connected with urban centers administratively, ecclesiastically, and commercially. As evident from texts of the period, society was divided into three groups: army, clergy, and farmers (*georgoi*).¹⁶⁷ It seems that in most Byzantine lands, intensive polyculture (producing more than one agricultural product)

was a common practice, along with stockbreeding. This was possibly the result of the loss of Byzantine lands in North Africa, the Near East, and the Balkans, which had been major sources of wheat for large urban centers, such as Constantinople.¹⁶⁸

The *Cadaster of Thebes*, dated shortly after the mid-eleventh century, shows that agriculture intensified during this period in Boeotia, while the number of landowners was rising.¹⁶⁹ The *Cadaster*, however, lists the names of landowners, but does not give the size of peasant holdings.¹⁷⁰ Twenty-four settlements are characterized as “villages,” located between the town of Thebes and the east coast of Boeotia, while some of the landowners mentioned are residents of Thebes and nearby Chalcis in Euboea, and their products are destined for those markets.¹⁷¹ A preliminary study of the *Cadaster* reveals that landholdings are dispersed rather than concentrated around Thebes; through a study of place-names, I have located such holdings at Pergion, Tachion, Loetraki, Kato Rizin, Dervenosalessi (Pileana), Retsona, Vathy, Mikro Vathy (Akrovathy), and Vrysouin (Vrysis) (fig. 10).¹⁷² No landholdings have been identified in the wider area of Tanagra. At first glance, all identified landholdings are located within the ancient borders of Thebes and Plataiai together. Apart from Thebes, the thirteenth *notitia* lists five suffragan bishoprics in the mid-twelfth century, including Zaratova, the successor settlement of the town of Askra (and home of Hesiod), possibly controlling ecclesiastically most of the territory of ancient Thespiiai, as well as Kastorion (ancient Thisbe), Kanala, Trichia, and Platana (none of these three yet identified with any known settlement in the region), while Diavleia and Koroneia are listed as suffragans of Athens.¹⁷³ Tanagra

and *Merovingian Periods*, ed. B. Hård and L. Larsson (Lund, 2002), 315. See also Austin, “Central Place Theory” (n. 4 above), 100–103; C. Scull, “Urban Centres in Pre-Viking England,” in *Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. J. Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), 291.

165 Sanders has correctly noted that the dramatic increase of middle Byzantine sites recorded during archaeological survey has been based primarily on the presence of glazed pottery, while plain wares (not easily dated due to their poor coverage in the existing literature) from earlier periods are unlikely to have been correctly identified. Sanders, “New Relative and Absolute Chronologies” (n. 126 above), 394–95.

166 Vionis, “Current Archaeological Research” (n. 20 above), 35; idem, “Rural and Household Archaeology” (n. 127 above), 32.

167 The issue of an agricultural law known as the *Farmer’s Law* in the eighth century is still a matter of debate among Byzantinists. This compilation of legal codes is rather problematic, notably concerning the description of certain agricultural and animal husbandry activities in specific Byzantine territories, and the degree of independence of the Byzantine farmer. Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 15–16; P. Gounaridis, *Η Δέση του χωρικού στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία* (Athens, 1993), 12. The *Geoponika* is another source of the tenth century, with information on land use and cultivation, animal husbandry, and weather forecasting. M. Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Westport, 2006), 158.

168 A. P. Kazhdan and A. Wharton-Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1985).

169 A. Avraméa, “Les Villages de Thessalie, de Grèce Centrale et du Péloponnèse (V^e–XIV^e Siècle),” in Lefort, Morrisson, and Sodini, *Les Villages* (n. 16 above), 220.

170 For a thorough review of the information retrieved from the *Cadaster of Thebes*, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 59–76.

171 Harvey, *Economic Expansion*, 228; Avraméa, “Les Villages,” 220.

172 N. Svoronos, “Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XI^e et XII^e siècles: Le cadastre de Thèbes,” *BCH* 83, no. 1 (1959): 1–145.

173 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 361, 366, notitia 13.449–450, 752–756. Dunn provides a useful overview and analysis of the rise and fall of bishoprics in middle Byzantine Boeotia. He further

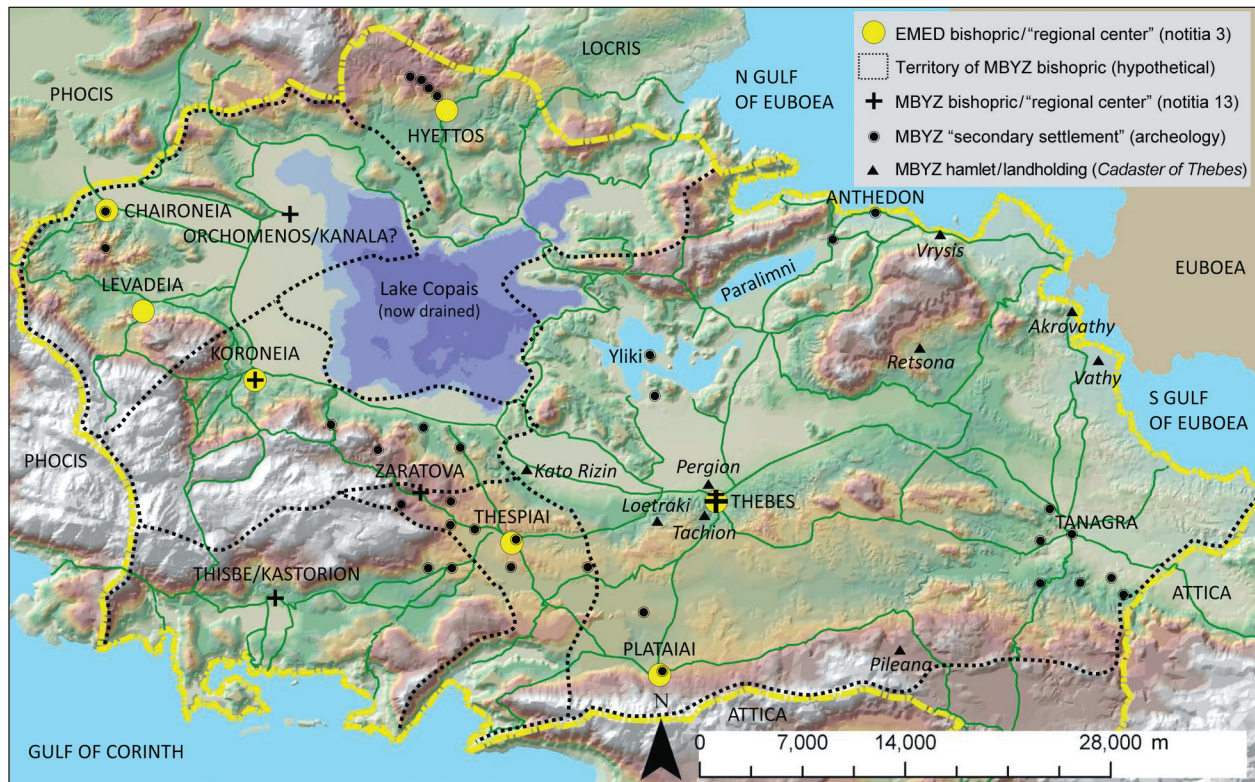


Fig. 10. Middle Byzantine bishoprics and secondary settlements, and the location of landholdings according to the *Cadaster of Thebes* (DEM by Emeri Farinetti, data by the author and the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project)

itself disappears as a bishopric, possibly in the seventh or eighth century, and is not listed as such again.

If the wealthiest and most populous bishopric of Thebes never lost its dominance in Boeotia and functioned as the provincial capital and central market of this region in middle and late Byzantium, then one may assume that lesser bishoprics should be rated as large and prosperous settlements, certainly larger than villages. But apparently not all of them were.¹⁷⁴ Intensive

argues that among the five listed suffragans of Thebes, Zaratova, and Kastorion may predate the twelfth century. It is possible that Kanala is to be identified as the ancient site of Orchomenos. Although largely guesswork, the fact that the word may derive from *κανάλιν*, or (water) channel/ditch, and that drainage channels of the Mycenaean period across Lake Copais may have remained visible to dwellers along the shores of the lake in middle Byzantine times, suggests that this bishopric was located around the Copais basin; Orchomenos is the only site with remains of the middle Byzantine period, such as the elaborately decorated church of Panagia Skripou, attested so close to the lake. Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators," 759–60.

¹⁷⁴ For similar conclusions, see *ibid.*, 762.

survey by the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project in and around the ancient city of Koroneia has identified the site of middle Byzantine Koroneia, but its size would rate it only as a village.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, previous work by the Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project in the Valley of the Muses has identified the site of Askra as middle Byzantine Zaratova, but it was certainly not larger than a village.¹⁷⁶ As Archibald Dunn has noted for middle Byzantine Boeotia, "we cannot regard the existence or foundation of new bishoprics as a straightforward sign of successful urbanization."¹⁷⁷ I would also propose that we should regard these settlement-bishoprics as successor sites of the early medieval fortified microtowns examined earlier, being small in size but important in status. As Angeliki Laiou has noted in the case of late

¹⁷⁵ John L. Bintliff, pers. comm.

¹⁷⁶ See Bintliff, "Valley of the Muses" (n. 96 above), 193–210; *idem*, *The Complete Archaeology of Greece: From Hunter-Gatherers to the 20th Century AD* (Oxford, 2012), 387.

¹⁷⁷ Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators," 764–65.

Byzantine Macedonia, sometimes settlements with large numbers of inhabitants are mentioned in texts as villages, while others with fewer inhabitants are referred to as towns.¹⁷⁸ Archaeology and text can now confirm a slightly different middle Byzantine settlement hierarchy, at least in central Greece, comprising country towns (such as Thebes), megavillages or villages/χωρία (such as Koroneia and Zaratova), hamlets or ἀγρίδια, estates or προάστεια, and farms or στάσεις.¹⁷⁹

But what is a megavillage or an average village in the context of eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium and what were its characteristics? Kekaumenos's *Strategikon* of the eleventh century emphasizes the importance of landed property, because "to own land is the most important source of income," while the tenth-century *Farmer's Law* informs us that the normal population consists of farmers in a village, not owners of large landed property; in the case of Boeotia, these large landowners are residents of Thebes and Chalcis, according to the *Cadaster*.¹⁸⁰ Dunn has argued that conventional agriculture and pastoralism in Boeotia were more important than the silk business, at least in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and that central Greece was supplying Constantinople with significant quantities of wheat down to the early fourteenth century, when the Bulgars interrupted the flow of Thracian wheat to Constantinople.¹⁸¹

Interestingly, the foundation of the large and elaborately decorated church of Panagia Skripou at Orchomenos by the *protospatharios* Leo during the reign of Basil I and his two sons (870–879) testifies to imperial interest in Boeotia and the agrarian exploitation of this fertile area, located not far from the town of Thebes. Amy Papalexandrou notes that one of the

dedicatory inscriptions (on the west wall of the church) informs us that "the patron himself owned the property upon which his church was constructed, and that he was in command of the region surrounding the site."¹⁸² Another important piece of information concerning the prosopography of laymen in Boeotia, their relation to the *Cadaster of Thebes*, and references to representative occupations and the location of certain villages in the region derives from the *typikon* of a Byzantine lay confraternity, a devotional and burial society founded in central Greece in the year 1048. Ioannes (monk and priest of Hagia Photeini), Soterichos (priest in the district of Copais), Gregorios Kalandos, and Georgios of Sigmata are listed in the *typikon* as prominent people living in the region surrounding Lake Copais. As John Nesbitt and John Wiita have pointed out, Georgios Kalandos was a member of a Theban family, whose name is also mentioned in the *Cadaster of Thebes*; Ioannes was monk and priest of Hagia Photeini, a tenth-century church near Thebes; and Georgios of Sigmata must have been from a substantial settlement at the foot of the mountain of Sigmata, close to the famous monastery bearing the same name. References to other prominent families possibly indicate their professions, such as Blatas (possibly deriving from βλαπτία, "purple cloth of silk"), Chalkeus ("smith"), Sapoleros ("soap maker"), and Maloseiros (probably deriving from Slavic, meaning "small cheese").¹⁸³ Evidence of this kind for settlement, property, and professions implies a mixed economy for Boeotia, based on agriculture and large estates, pastoralism, and industry.

According to the schematic map drawn by the historian Alain Ducellier of the pattern of settlement and cultivation within a Byzantine village territory, based on documentary sources, a number of farms and hamlets were dependent on the main village of the region, while areas under crop cultivation, vineyards, and fruit and vegetable gardens surrounded each settlement.¹⁸⁴

178 The population of villages varied, some being quite large and comprised of approximately one thousand people. A. Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries," in Laiou, *Economic History of Byzantium* (n. 41 above), 317–18.

179 P. Armstrong, "The Survey Area in the Byzantine and Ottoman Periods," in Cavanagh et al., *Continuity and Change in a Greek Rural Landscape* (n. 13 above), 339–402; J. Lefort, "The Rural Economy, Seventh–Twelfth Centuries," in Laiou, *Economic History of Byzantium*, 236–37; Koder, "Land Use and Settlement," 167–68; S. E. J. Gerstel, "Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village: Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscapes in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese," in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. eadem (Washington, DC, 2013), 354.

180 Koder, "Land Use and Settlement," 163.

181 Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators," 770.

182 A. Papalexandrou, "The Church of the Virgin of Skripou: Architecture, Sculpture and Inscriptions in Ninth-Century Byzantium" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1998), 18–24, 149. Meanwhile, as the author argues, the animals carved on the string courses and friezes of the building have usually been considered sources of the patron's wealth.

183 J. Nesbitt and J. Wiita, "A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era," *BZ* 68 (1975): 373–78.

184 A. Ducellier, *Byzance et le monde Orthodoxe* (Paris, 1986), 187–88. See also Lefort, "Rural Economy," 236–37; Bintliff, Howard,

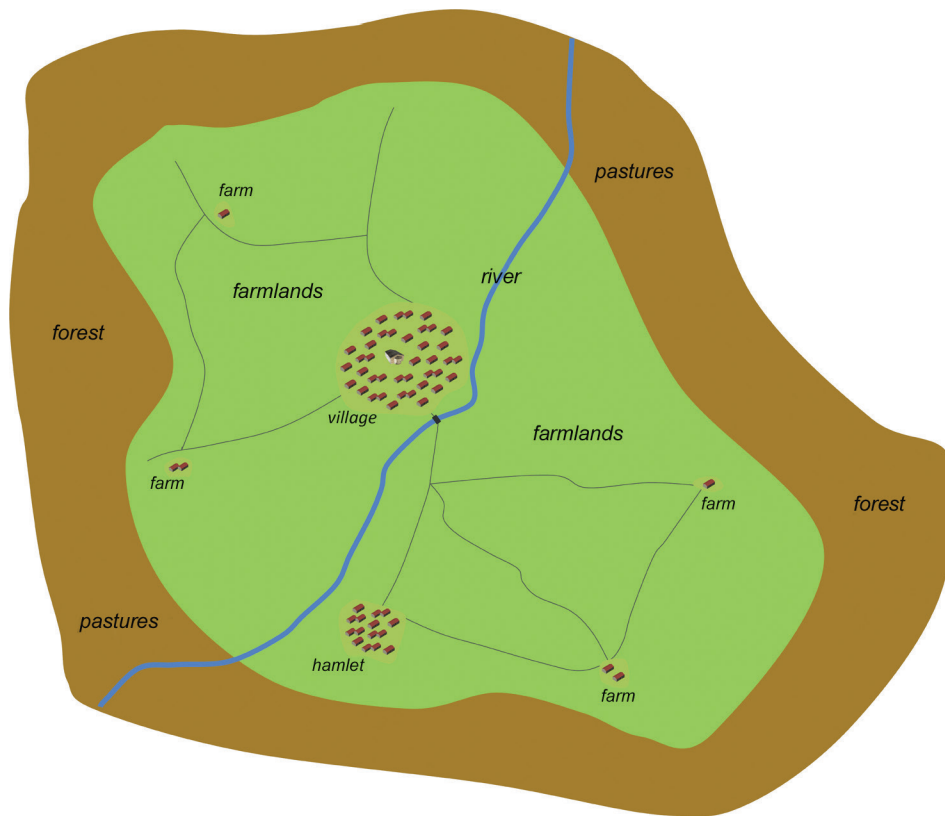


Fig. 11.
The schematic map
of Alain Ducellier of
a Byzantine village
territory (sketch plan
adjusted and redrawn
by the author)

Village, hamlets, and farms, close to water sources and connected by a network of roads and paths, formed an economically successful and distinctively autonomous entity, even though their inhabitants were almost exclusively tenants (fig. 11). A picture of the size and physical environment of a Byzantine village on the island of Naxos has been devised through a combination of surface survey and the application of historical landscape characterization (a collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh and Newcastle). In a remote area that appears to have remained almost intact for the past five hundred years, one can trace all the elements discussed by Byzantine sources and schematized by Ducellier.¹⁸⁵ A large village or two hamlets close to each other, defined by a concentration of middle and

late Byzantine ceramics around two middle Byzantine churches, is surrounded by cultivable land on terraces, abundant pastoral ground, and sources of fresh water (fig. 12).¹⁸⁶ This rural establishment is located in a border zone between cultivated and rough ground, making use of every resource provided by an island environment.

In *Tanagrike*, the network of middle Byzantine settlements comprises a megavillage, a smaller village, four hamlets, and two farms (fig. 13). The village of Agios Thomas (TS5), identified around the twelfth-century church of Saint Thomas, is located one kilometer east of the city. It is approximately 1.5 hectares in size, while the ceramic assemblage suggests that it was occupied from the eleventh to the mid-fourteenth century, reaching its peak from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century. Similarly, the large hamlet of Agia Aikaterini (TS15) is located around a rebuilt (possibly middle Byzantine) chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine,

and Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland* (n. 13 above), 23–24; Vionis, “Rural and Household Archaeology,” 31–32.

185 The technique of historical landscape characterization (HLC) is different to traditional archaeological mapping methods because it assigns historic character to the whole landscape rather than just selected monuments or small areas. HLC draws on techniques used also in geology (to show soil-type) or in ecology (to map habitats). See J. Crow, S. Turner, and A. K. Vionis, “Characterizing the Historic

Landscapes of Naxos,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 24, no. 1 (2011): 111–37.

186 *Ibid.*, 128.

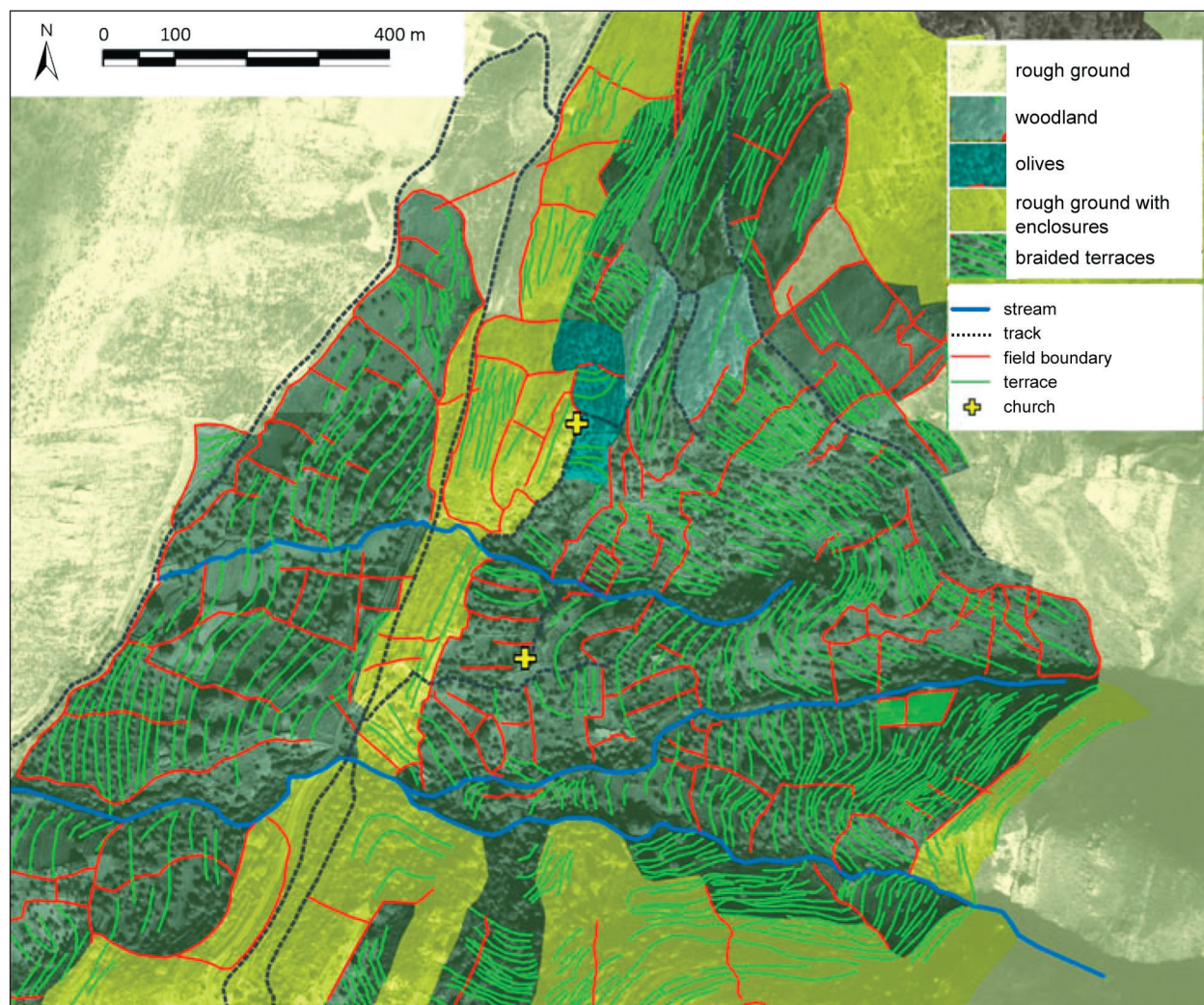


Fig. 12. Historic landscape characterization analysis of the region of Aria, Naxos includes IKONOS material, © 2006 Space Imaging LLC, all rights reserved)

two kilometers southwest of ancient Tanagra. The site occupies an area of approximately two hectares, with surface ceramics also dated from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Agios Polykarpos (TS21) is another site identified as a tiny hamlet of the same period, occupying 0.5 hectares around the renovated late Byzantine chapel of Saint Polykarp,¹⁸⁷ half a kilometer northwest

of the ancient city. The farm site of Kastri (TS18), examined above, is located two kilometers southwest of Tanagra and occupies the hill of Agios Konstantinos, with limited traces of habitation in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (the ceramic material, however, dates predominantly to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries).

Four other Byzantine-Frankish hamlet and village sites were identified in the upland Guinosati valley, east and west of the modern village of Agios Thomas. The village site of Agios Dimitrios (TS30) is the largest in the area; it is located on the top of a gentle hill and occupies an area of 2.3 hectares to the northeast of

187 Although the church of Saint Polykarp bears twelfth-century architectural characteristics, it has been dated to the mid-/late thirteenth century. See S. Mamaloukos, "Ο ναός του Αγίου Πολυκάρπου στην Τανάγρα (Μπράτσι) Βοιωτίας," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ.* 15 (2004): 138.

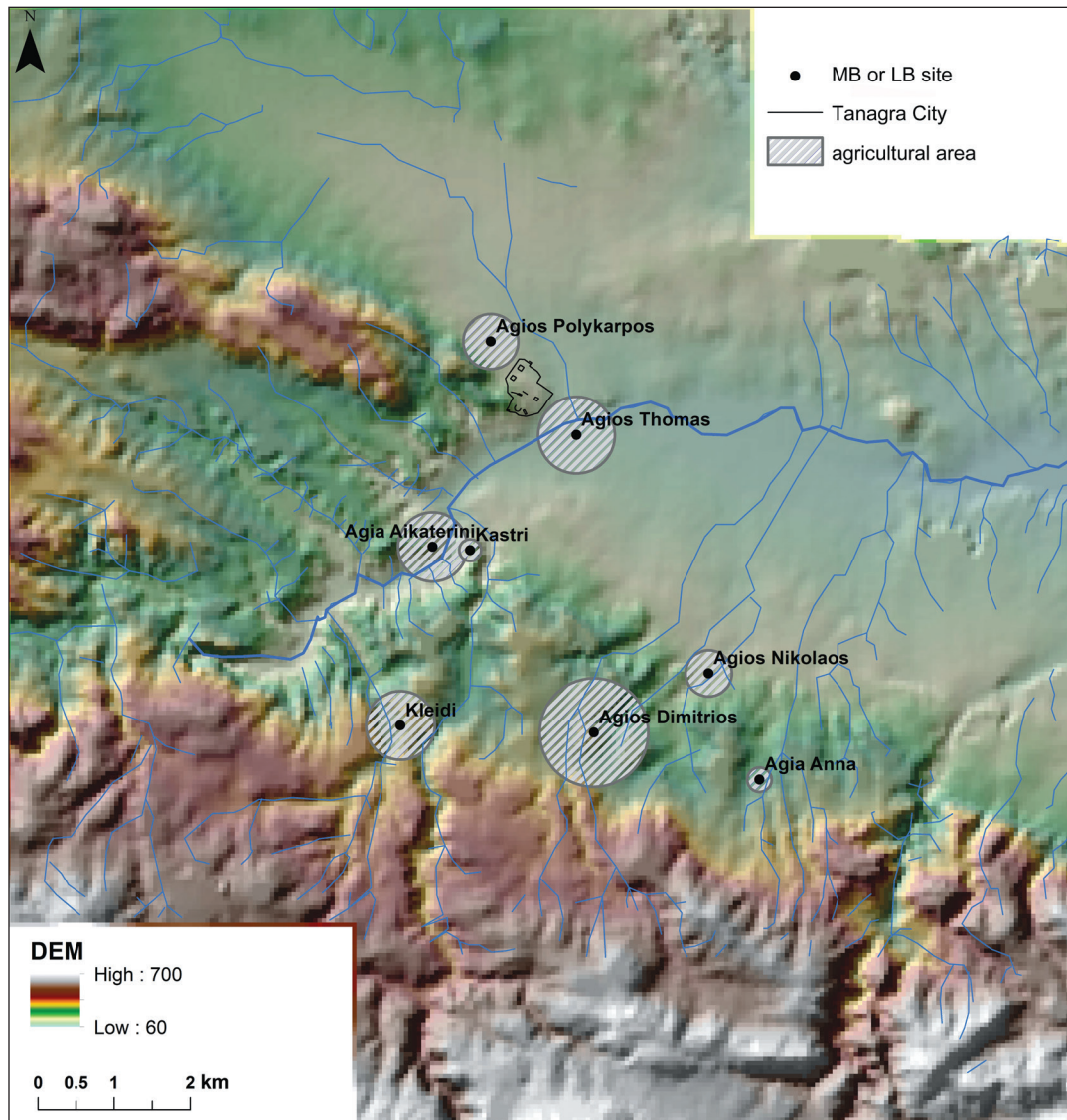


Fig. 13. Middle-late Byzantine sites in the *Tanagrike* and their agricultural territories (DEM and GIS mapping by Niki Kyriacou)

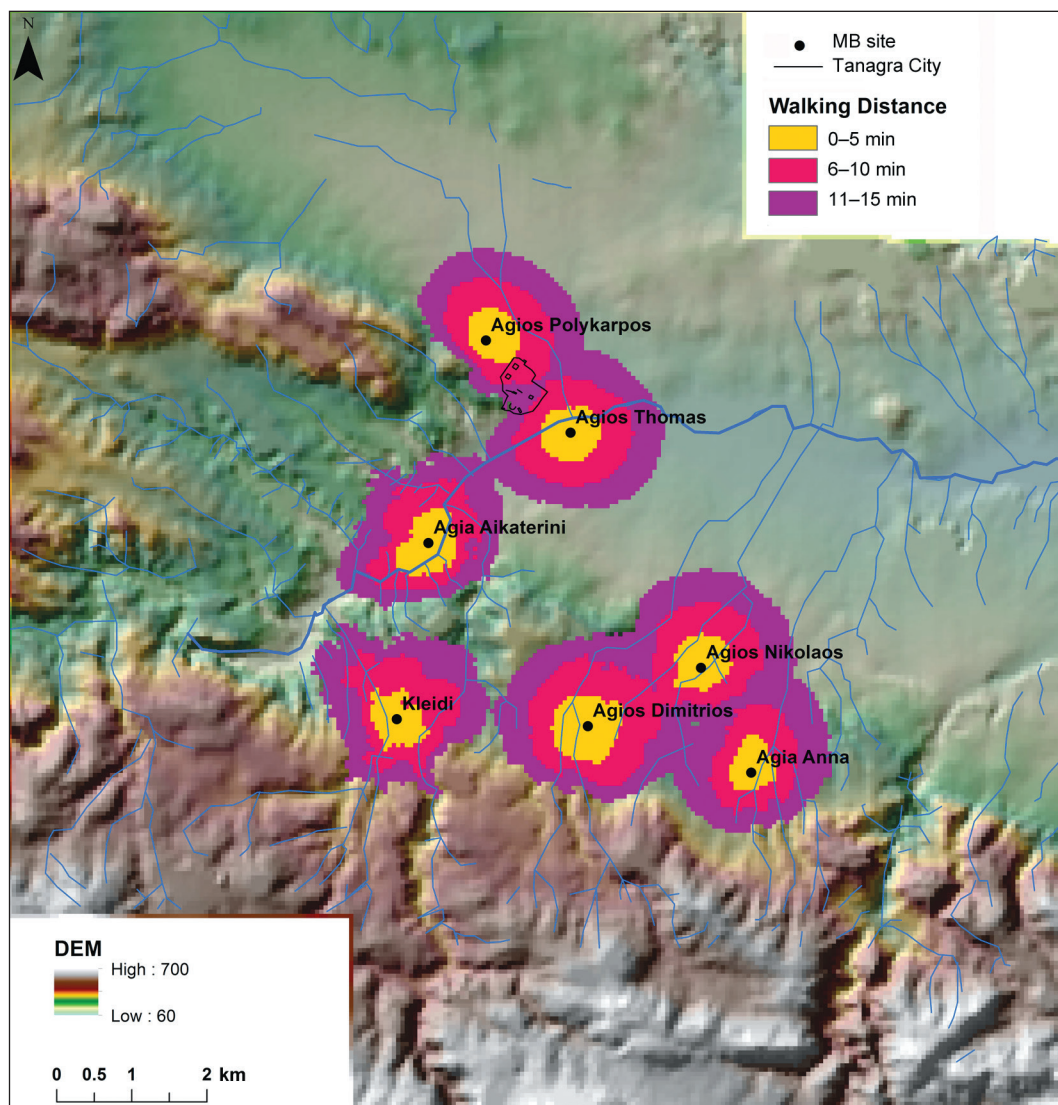
the renovated (possibly Byzantine) chapel dedicated to Saint Dimitrios. The sites of Agios Nikolaos (TS31, small hamlet), Agia Anna (TS32, farm), and Kleidi (TS36, large hamlet) are all located around ruined or renovated churches. Like the sites in the immediate territory of Tanagra, those in the Guinosati valley are dated to the eleventh through fourteenth centuries.¹⁸⁸

188 Vionis, "Current Archaeological Research," 32–33. The Ottoman serf-estate (*çiftlik*) of Guinosati (TS23), approximately 6.5 kilometers southeast of Tanagra, is a site of the Ottoman period, recorded in the Ottoman tax registers of 1466 (a tiny hamlet/*çiftlik* with ten households) and in 1646 with twenty-three households; Bartzi, a second tiny hamlet/*çiftlik* of the late sixteenth to

They are spaced at almost equal distances both in the Asopos valley and on the hills to the south. Two of the largest settlements, Agios Dimitrios on the southern hills and Agios Thomas in the Asopos valley, must have functioned as the main villages of the region, with minor settlements scattered around. The village of Agios Thomas, located on the Asopos River, is of

early eighteenth centuries was discovered on the acropolis hill of ancient Tanagra. See A. K. Vionis, "The Archaeology of Ottoman Villages in Central Greece: Ceramics, Housing and Everyday Life in Post-Medieval Rural Boeotia," in *Studies in Honor of Hayat Erkanal: Cultural Reflections*, ed. A. Erkanal-Öktü (Istanbul, 2006), 789–91.

Fig. 14.
Cost-surface
analysis of middle
Byzantine sites in
the *Tanagrike*
(DEM and
cost-surface
analysis by Niki
Kyriacou)



particular interest. A large church was constructed here in the early twelfth century, with the village extending to the northeast, as indicated by a large concentration of surface ceramics.¹⁸⁹

The results of GIS analyses applied in the case of the middle Byzantine settlements in the region to identify settlement hierarchy, intersite relationships, and village–community territorial boundaries can now

be confirmed. According to cost-surface analysis, the distance between neighboring major and minor settlement sites is such that it would take between five and fifteen minutes to go from one to the other (fig. 14). Notably, agricultural land around each settlement is sufficient to feed the population and provide a surplus for export. Furthermore, viewshed analysis confirmed that visibility from each megavillage, that is, Agios Thomas in the valley and Agios Dimitrios on the southern hills, is restricted to its respective territories and satellite settlements (fig. 15).

This pattern was repeated on all other sites in the *Tanagrike*, with churches marking the focus of each settlement, functioning as the parish churches of

189 For more information regarding the architectural shape and dating of the middle Byzantine church of Agios Thomas, see A. M. Simatou and R. Christodouloupoulou, “Άγιος Θωμάς Τανάγρας,” in *Λαμπηδών: Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίλι*, ed. M. Aspravaravaki (Athens, 2003), 2:727–48.

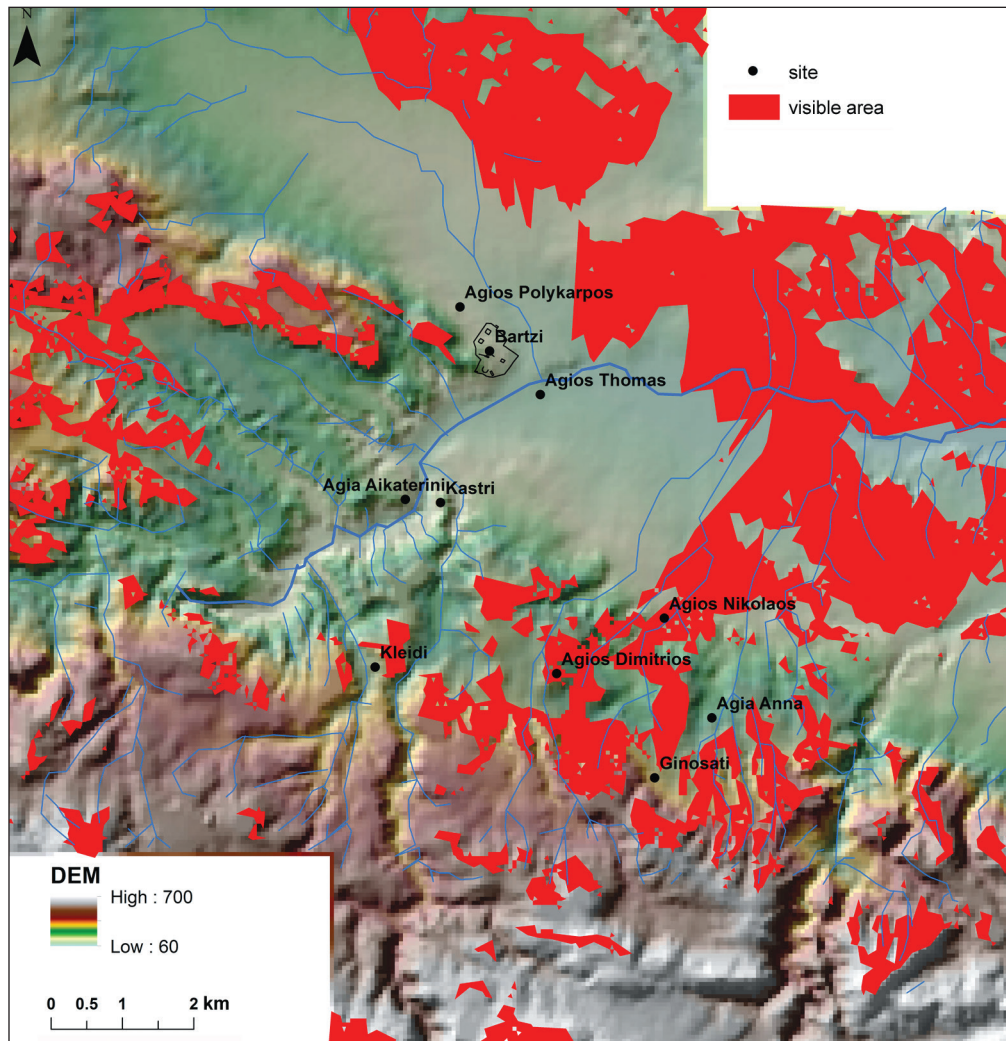


Fig. 15.
Viewshed analysis
from the site of Agios
Dimitrios in the
Tanagrike (DEM and
viewshed analysis by
Niki Kyriacou)

each community for communal worship, rather than as boundary markers, as has been noted for outlying churches in the countryside of Crete and Naxos.¹⁹⁰ Although most of the chapels marking the spiritual and architectural centers of these settlements are small, they preserve remarkable stylistic details. They were not necessarily meant to impress or to confirm the already established Christian identity of the local population, but rather emphasized the community's territory, and, as Sharon Gerstel has pointed out, "regulated and

protected the extended families that typically comprised the population of the village."¹⁹¹ These small churches may well have been endowed by an individual or family in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a "phenomenon naturally linked with economic prosperity, a prosperity which historians are certain that Greece enjoyed" during this period.¹⁹² These wealthy individuals must have been among the new large landowners who decided to invest part of their income on the construction of churches. A church was built on

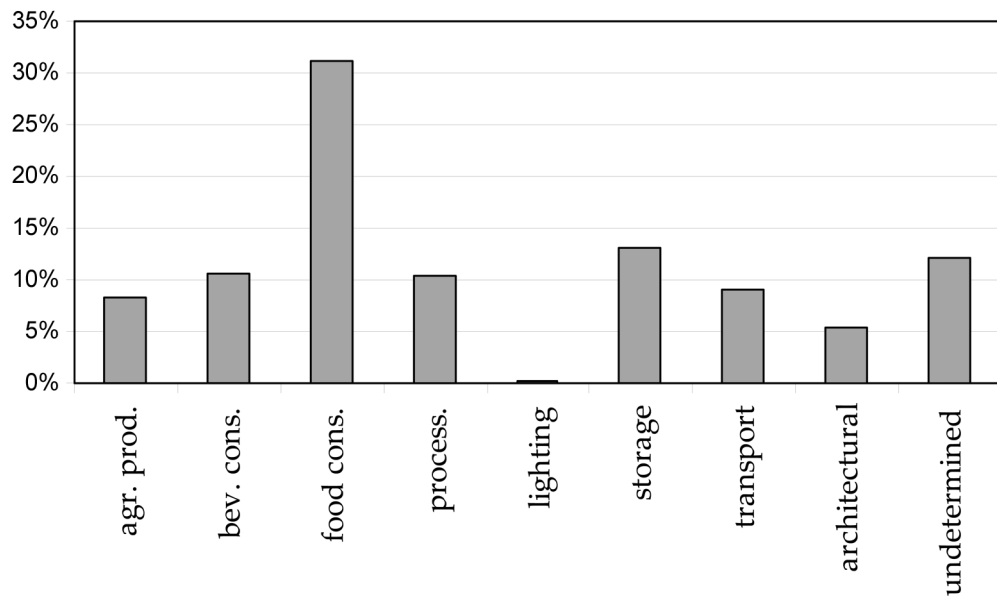
190 L. Nixon, *Making a Landscape Sacred: Outlying Churches and Icon Stands in Sphakia, Southwestern Crete* (Oxford, 2006), 23–26; Crow, Turner, and Vionis, "Historic Landscapes of Naxos," 130–32; A. K. Vionis, "The Archaeology of Landscape and Material Culture in Late Byzantine–Frankish Greece," *Pharos* 20, no. 1 (2014): 338.

191 S. E. J. Gerstel, "The Byzantine Village Church: Observations on Its Location and on Agricultural Aspects of Its Program," in Lefort, Morrisson, and Sodini, *Les Villages*, 166; Vionis, "Late Byzantine–Frankish Greece," 338.

192 Dunn, "Historical and Archaeological Indicators," 764.

Tanagrike - Byzantine sites - functional analysis

Fig. 16.
Percentages of
purposes of
ceramic wares
from middle-late
Byzantine sites in
the *Tanagrike*
(data and graph
by the author)



property that formed part of an estate, a hamlet, or a village as a form of piety and in the hope of protection and prosperity.

The ceramic assemblages from the rural settlements in the *Tanagrike* present a similar situation. The percentage of glazed pottery steadily increases after the tenth century in urban centers and a century later in the countryside, while imported wares in the *Tanagrike* come from neighboring Thebes and Corinth. The ceramic record overall testifies to an increase in settlement activity between the mid-twelfth and mid- or late thirteenth centuries, and at the same time indicates a growth in the disposable income of the inhabitants, who were now able to purchase glazed tableware for food and beverage consumption (fig. 16).¹⁹³ Of greater interest, however, are the transport amphorae. Since the beginning of the Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project in the *Tanagrike*, the remarkable resemblance between the presumably local, undecorated coarse vessels and transport amphorae in terms of fabric and surface treatment has been noted several times. The commonest types of middle and late Byzantine amphora are the so-called Gunsenin types II and III, found in large quantities all over Boeotia as well as in other regions

of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, a waster resembling Gunsenin type II found just outside the late antique walls of Tanagra led to suggestions about the origin of this vessel type by comparison with other undecorated utilitarian vessels from the region.¹⁹⁴ If indeed Gunsenin type II prove to be of local production, then the prosperity and new settlement pattern of *Tanagrike* and many parts of middle Byzantine Greece could be viewed from a more optimistic angle. The results of chemical analyses, using portable XRF, of a sample of domestic coarse wares and amphorae from the *Tanagrike* seem to indicate that this most common middle Byzantine amphora type was produced in Boeotia, if not at Tanagra itself.¹⁹⁵

194 Vionis, "Current Archaeological Research," 38, 40, fig. 17. An over-fired handle fragment, probably a waster from a Gunsenin II amphora, was retrieved during the course of intensive surface survey a few meters to the northeast of the Tanagra city wall.

195 The results of chemical analyses (with the use of a portable XRF) of a sample of domestic common wares (cooking pots, jugs, stamnoi, and pithoi) and fragments of Gunsenin types II and III, taken from a number of Byzantine sites in the region of Tanagra in 2012 (with written permission from the Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of Boeotia and Euboea), confirmed that the commonest types of Byzantine amphora (Gunsenin II in particular) must have been produced within the wider region of Boeotia, if not Tanagra itself. Dr. Andreas Charalambous (former postdoctoral fellow, NARNIA Archaeological Project, University of Cyprus), to whom I am most grateful, carried out chemical analyses of fifty samples. A. Vionis, "The Byzantine to Early Modern Pottery from Thespiai,"

193 Sanders, "New Relative and Absolute Chronologies," 170; idem, "Recent Developments" (n. 119 above), 394; Vionis, "Current Archaeological Research," 36–39; idem, "Rural and Household Archaeology," 33–35.

The *Cadaster of Thebes*, information about the rise and fall of middle Byzantine episcopacy, the foundation of large and elaborate churches and small parish chapels throughout the region, and the material record from intensive surface survey all indicate a new distribution of settlements and a new settlement hierarchy, involving the rise of megavillages and other settlement types, and a new provincial elite. However, narratives about agricultural land use do not refer to the input of noneconomic factors (political, cultural) that may have affected the occupational record of middle Byzantine Boeotia. These factors are more evident during the next period of economic fluorescence and settlement continuity.

In the succeeding late Byzantine or Frankish period, from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century, Boeotia became a Frankish possession and belonged to the Duchy of Athens, which had two centers: Athens and Thebes. As discussed by Peter Lock in the case of Frankish settlements (identified through intensive survey in other regions of the province), members of the imported Frankish elite and minor feudal lords established themselves in castles and towers in or near the long-established settlements of the middle Byzantine period.¹⁹⁶ As usual, the Frankish conquest adjusted its feudal control points to the existing Byzantine settlement network in the *Tanagrike*. All the middle Byzantine settlements identified in the region continued to exist into the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, with two new sites appearing, not larger than a farmstead, one within the walls of Tanagra and another within the walls of Kastri. Most interestingly, the Frankish takeover of the village of Agios Thomas in the thirteenth century saw its middle Byzantine church converted into a feudal tower with a chapel in its basement (fig. 17).¹⁹⁷

Settlement continuity of this kind also occurred elsewhere in Boeotia. For example, at the site of the



Fig. 17.
3-D reconstruction of the Frankish tower at the site of Agios Thomas (image by Chiara Piccoli)

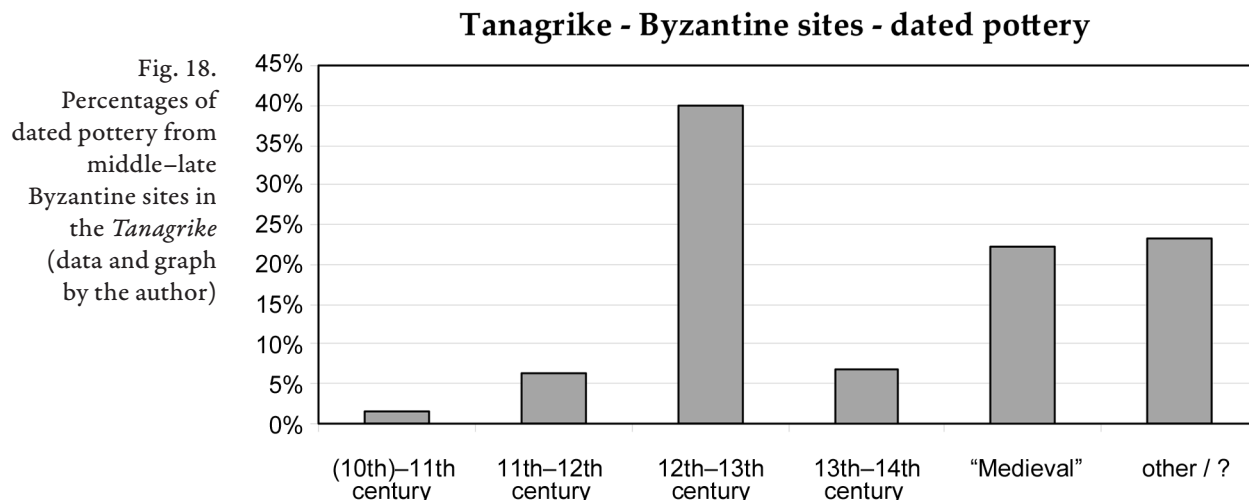
ancient city of Thespiiai, the middle Byzantine church, which was built on the foundations of an early Christian basilica, was later joined by a large estate tower of the French monastic order of the Premonstratensians, who acquired this settlement, according to a papal letter, in the early thirteenth century.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, in the microlandscape of the Valley of the Muses, the middle Byzantine settlement of Zaratova, which was one of the new eleventh/twelfth-century bishoprics of Boeotia, was transferred five hundred meters to the east in the early thirteenth century; a Frankish tower was built

in *Approaching the Ancient City: Urban Survey at Ancient Thespiiai, Boeotia, Greece*, ed. J. L. Bintliff and A. M. Snodgrass (Cambridge, 2017), 358–61.

196 P. Lock, “The Frankish Towers of Central Greece,” *BSA* 81 (1986): 101–23; idem, 1997, “The Frankish Period in Boeotia: Problems and Perspectives,” in Bintliff, *Archaeology of Central Greece* (n. 95 above), 305–13; Bintliff, *Complete Archaeology of Greece*, 416–35.

197 Simatou and Christodouloupoulou, “Ἅγιος Θωμάς,” 737–38; Vionis, “Current Archaeological Research,” 30; idem, “Late Byzantine–Frankish Greece,” 322.

198 Bintliff, Howard, and Snodgrass, *Testing the Hinterland*, 181; Bintliff, *Complete Archaeology of Greece*, 431.



on a high crag and the settlement itself, larger than its middle Byzantine predecessor, was established on the hillside below.¹⁹⁹

The ceramic evidence from sites in the *Tanagrike* shows a peak in glazed wares into the mid- and late thirteenth century (fig. 18), with new imports from Thebes, Corinth, Thessalonike, and Lemnos, and a few from Italy in the fourteenth century. It seems that most rural homesteads were using glazed tablewares, reflecting the continuous expansion of population, despite increased feudal pressure on village communities. This was also the period when pottery production was decentralized and small-scale. Family-run workshops may have been established outside large urban centers, following the decentralization of industry previously located exclusively in the towns.²⁰⁰ This continuity and growth in settlement activity in the *Tanagrike* accords with the general demographic and economic florescence noted for other regions of thirteenth-century Greece, despite the political decline and fragmentation of the Byzantine world.

199 Vionis, "Current Archaeological Research," 35–36; Bintliff, *Complete Archaeology of Greece*, 421.

200 D. Papanikola-Bakirtzis, "Εργαστήρια εφραλωμένης κεραμικής στο βυζαντινό κόσμο," in *Actes du VII^e Congrès International sur la céramique médiévale en Méditerranée, Thessaloniki, 11–16 Octobre 1999* (Athens, 2003), 45–66; A. Laiou and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 184–87; Vionis, "Late Byzantine–Frankish Greece," 335.

Concluding Remarks

The evidence presented above, as well as the proposed new terminology to explain settlement phenomena in the Byzantine province of Boeotia, has no doubt made clear the difference between my own views and those of various historical schools, which either stress "continuity" or total "disruption" and "transformation" from late antiquity to the Byzantine early Middle Ages. The British historical school explains urban continuity, for example, using terms such as "ruralized cities," "shifting cities," "fortress cities," and "continuous cities," which I do not favor. While we must accept the validity of the historical sources regarding the impact of Avaro-Slav and Arab invasions during the Byzantine early Middle Ages, and the effect of political and economic reforms imposed by the central government of Constantinople in the middle Byzantine period as factors which explain general trends in society and economy, we should not underestimate the capacity of archaeology to throw light on particular histories and responses within specific regions.

Recent and ongoing archaeological excavations have revealed that the transition from *polis* to *kastro*, traditionally placed in the Byzantine early Middle Ages, had already begun before the mid-seventh century in the Aegean. In the case of Kastri in the *Tanagrike*, the occupation of a small naturally fortified site started in the fifth or sixth century. If this is evidence for urban ruralization, then we need to remove any negative connotations from the term "ruralization" when referring

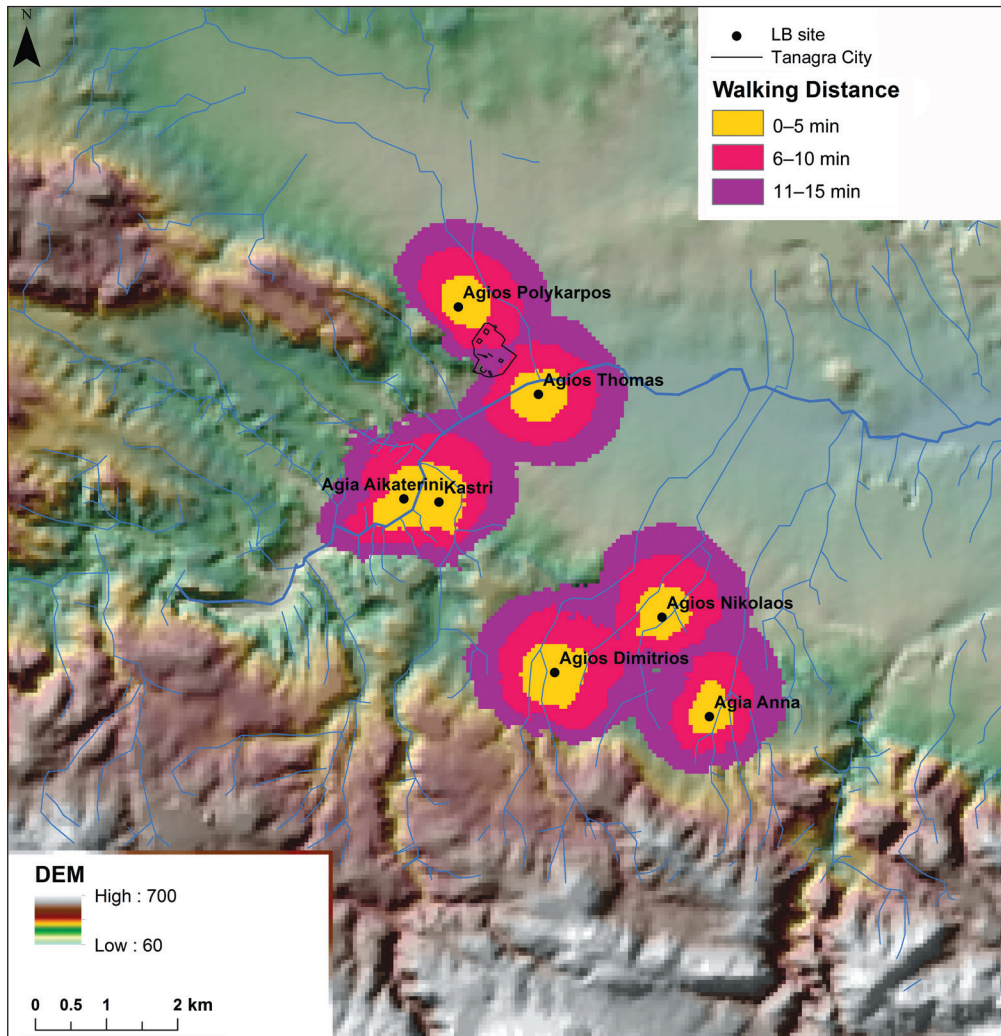


Fig. 19.
Cost-surface
analysis of late
Byzantine sites in
the *Tanagrike*
(DEM and cost
surface analysis by
Niki Kyriacou)

to settlement phenomena in the Byzantine early Middle Ages. It is true that sites were mostly smaller in size and fortified in this period, and that industrial production decreased. If, however, populations were engaged primarily in agriculture and pastoralism, this is not a sign of decline but of adaptation to a new socioeconomic reality. One should not forget that villa-estates appear in the fifth to sixth centuries in the *Tanagrike*, not far from the city walls of late antique Tanagra, and that peasants comprised a large part of urban populations before the seventh century. If the so-called decline of long-distance trade in the late seventh and eighth centuries is responsible for urban ruralization, then we should return to the archaeological record and restudy our material; as in the case of Hyettos in northern Boeotia, mentioned earlier, we will soon realize that

ceramic evidence for trade, at least at the regional and interregional level, continued into the eighth and ninth centuries. Thus it becomes clear that the role of late antique cities, which lost their administrative independence and monumentality in the seventh century, was transferred to the fortified microtowns that succeeded them. The political and economic circumstances of this period should lead us to view microtowns as transformed entities rather than as degenerate versions of monumental late antique cities.

Why should these microtowns be viewed as new, transformed entities? The answer has already been provided in the context of the minor bishoprics that appeared in Boeotia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Obviously, perceptions of scale and monumentality changed after the end of late antiquity. The status of

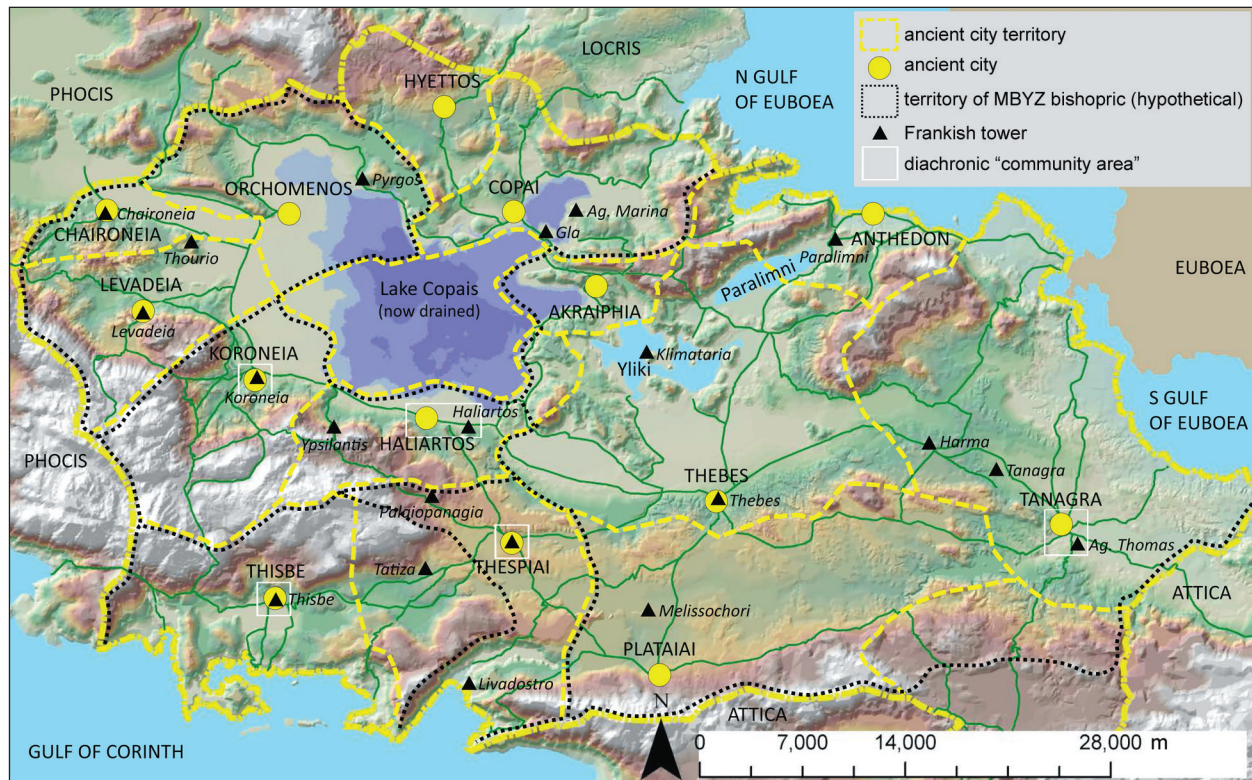


Fig. 20. Long-term settlement in Boeotia and community-area theory (DEM and ancient city territories by Emeri Farinetti, data of the Byzantine–Frankish period by the author)

these settlements as bishoprics indicates that they were probably large and important, having been established in a period traditionally seen as one of urban and rural revitalization, yet the archaeological record reveals that they were nothing more than villages or, perhaps, megavillages. This transition from the early medieval microtown (such as Kastri) to the middle Byzantine megavillage (such as Agios Thomas and Agios Dimitrios) with minor satellite settlements, reminds us of the seventeenth-century breakup of large villages into dispersed *çiftlik*s or farm-estates, in the Ottoman Empire due to increased commercial agriculture.

Thus, during the middle Byzantine period, the role of the early medieval microtowns as focal points of settlement within microregions was transferred to megavillages, comprised of a large settlement with many smaller agricultural establishments, which are close to and almost equidistant from their nearest neighbors. The size and population of each site can be estimated, based on surface survey and textual sources referring to similar Byzantine landscapes and

settlements elsewhere. GIS analysis confirms that we are dealing with a single community of peasants, residing in small villages, hamlets, and farms, always close to and dependent on the megavillage. Cost-surface analysis of sites in the *Tanagrike* visualizes this phenomenon successfully: distances between major and minor settlements are such that it would take only five to fifteen minutes to reach the neighboring settlement (fig. 14). The agricultural land around each settlement was sufficient to feed the population and provide a surplus for export (fig. 13). This surplus would have allowed peasants to acquire cash to meet their tax obligations, possibly transported in Gunsenin type II amphorae. Viewshed analysis also confirms that visibility from each of the megavillages, that is Agios Thomas in the valley and Agios Dimitrios on the southern hills, is restricted to their respective territories and satellite settlements (fig. 15).

Settlement activity in the *Tanagrike* reached its zenith in the thirteenth century, and disappeared in the mid-fourteenth century as a result of the bubonic


plague. The results from GIS analysis are consistent with results from earlier periods (fig. 19). Although under a new political regime, peasants, now overseen by a minor feudal lord, continued to use the same land. The settlement system revolved around the same megavillages, now marked by the construction of feudal towers, symbols of a new regime and status.

Application of the community-area theory, which aims to recognize shifts in the location of the main settlements within each settlement chamber, that is, within each particular microregion, indicates a continuity of settlement at or adjacent to the occupation of the previous phase. The most characteristic examples of settlement evolution from late antiquity to the Frankish period include Chaironeia, Koroneia, Haliartos, Thespias, and the *Tanagrike*, of course, where the middle and late Byzantine village of Agios Thomas is located only one kilometer from late antique Tanagra. We should not underestimate the role memory may have played in settlement location and history.

As illustrated in the case of the *Tanagrike*, Frankish towers marked settlement sites on or close to preexisting settlements. We can clearly visualize the historical evolution of settlement within each community area from late antiquity or even the classical period (fig. 20).

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated that the fragmented histories of the *Tanagrike* in Byzantine Boeotia can be understood only when inserted into their *longue durée* and that, through the intensive study of microregions and individual local histories, we can reconstruct a more detailed picture of the varied realities of the Byzantine world.

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